

Russian Influence and Kyrgyz Weakness: A Realist Understanding of Kyrgyz  
National Interest.

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Thesis submitted to the faculty of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State  
University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

In

Political Science

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November 25, 2013

Blacksburg, VA

Keywords: Kyrgyzstan, Russia, National Interest, Realism

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis explores whether the Kyrgyz Republic has operated in its national interest during the post-September 11, 2001 era by examining the Kyrgyz government's decisions in the cases of the American and Russian military installations leased within Kyrgyzstan. It uses a Realist approach to "national interest" and explains whether and how the Kyrgyz Republic's decisions increased its defense capabilities, improved its financial situation and created a better political environment in which to operate. The study employed news sources in English and Russian, recently released U.S. State Department diplomatic cables, qualitative analyses by regional experts and quantitative data from government bodies. I contend that it is consistent with Kyrgyz national interest to close the American base while maintaining the Russian military presence; the Russian Federation's support of the Kyrgyz Republic is apparently conditional on expulsion of the American bases. The analysis suggests that a more thorough understanding of how the Kyrgyz Republic conceptualizes its national interest can help international policy makers formulate more effective strategies to collaborate with it.

Dedication

*Para mi esposa, Adriana Isabel Smart:*

*“La vida es un carnaval”. Gracias por tu ayuda y amor.*

## The Author's Acknowledgements

A very sincere thank you to my Committee: Dr. Priya Dixit, Dr. Karen Hult and Dr. Curtiss Swezy. I appreciate all of your time, help and assistance more than you could know.

## Table of Contents

Abstract	ii
Dedication	iii
Acknowledgement	iv
Table of Contents	v
List of Tables	vi
List of Abbreviations	vii
Chapter I: Introduction	1
Chapter II: Research Design and Methodology	4
Chapter III: Literature Review	6
Chapter IV: Results	25
Chapter V: Discussion	27
Chapter VI: Conclusions	83
Works Cited	88

List of tables and maps

Table 1: Supporting or Opposing “National Interest”

24

## List of Abbreviations

C.I.A. – Central Intelligence Agency

G.D.P. – Gross Domestic Product

K.G.B. – *Komitet' gosudarstvennoj bezopasnosti*; trans.: The Committee for Government Security

K.R. – Kyrgyz Republic

F.B.I. – Federal Bureau of Investigation

M.T.C. – Manas Transit Center which was formerly known as the United States Airbase at Manas and as the Ganci Airbase before that

P.P.P. – Purchasing power parity

S.S.R. – Soviet Socialist Republic

Trans. - Translation

U.S. – United States

U.S.A. – United States of America

U.S.D. – United States Dollars

U.S.S.R. – Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

## Chapter 1: Introduction

The two decades since the fall of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics in 1991 have pushed the sovereign and officially independent Kyrgyz Republic to decide its own fate. In doing so it must carefully consider the courses of action that are likely to support or undermine its “national interest.” Here, I define national interest following the realist school of international relations. In this view, a state acts in its national interest when it seeks to strengthen its defense capabilities, improve its financial situation and create a better political environment for itself. The goal of this research was to probe whether and how the Kyrgyz operated in their national interests, focusing on their different treatment of Russian and the American military installations. The U.S. and Russia have had quite disparate experiences in dealing with Kyrgyz leadership, and officials at the American base were informed during the summer of 2013 that it must close before the autumn of 2014. The study explores whether the expulsion of the American base and the preservation of the Russian base reflected Kyrgyz national interests.

The scope of this thesis is limited to the post-September 11, 2001 era; an era that saw a general increase in attention given to Kyrgyzstan by the West. The Central Asian Republics share cultural, historical and geographic ties with Afghanistan. An understanding of Kyrgyzstan can help provide a more thorough understanding of the situation in Central Asia as a whole. Moreover, a study of Kyrgyzstan’s national interest considerations may allow observers to better predict how the country will operate in the future in national security, trade and diplomatic affairs.

The overarching objective of this thesis is to address the gap in scholarship related to interpretations of “national interest” in the context of the Kyrgyz Republic. Kyrgyzstan appears

to be forgoing national independence by allowing a large number of Russian military installations in its rather small territory (roughly the size of South Dakota), while expelling the lone United States' base. Yet I argue that Kyrgyzstan is in fact serving its "national interest." As this thesis explains, it is a very remote and impoverished country that does not command a great deal of attention on the world stage. Nonetheless, Russia has essentially elected to take the Kyrgyz Republic under its wing, and the Kyrgyz have accepted this offer. The possible Faustian bargain is that the Kyrgyz cannot entertain the option of also collaborating with other powers, but must shun them; in return, however, the Russians grant the Kyrgyz levels of economic, military and political support that they would be unlikely to find anywhere else.

The size of the U.S. population is more than double that of Russia,<sup>1</sup> the U.S. economy is seven-and-a-half times larger than the Russian economy,<sup>2</sup> and U.S. military expenditures are almost eight times larger.<sup>3</sup> Even so, Kyrgyzstan's decision can be seen as a strategic one as it serves their best interests in terms of economics, defense and politics. The United States interest in Kyrgyzstan seems to be limited to the U.S.-led war in Afghanistan; there is no clear sign that the U.S. would remain active in supporting the country following its conclusion. Russia in

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<sup>1</sup> Nations Online, "Population Figures by Country." Last modified 2012. (accessed October 23, 2013). <http://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/population-by-country.htm>.

<sup>2</sup> World Bank, "World Development Indicators Database." Last modified 23 September 2013. (accessed October 23), 2013. <http://databank.worldbank.org/data/download/GDP.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> World Bank, "Military expenditures as a percent of GDP." Last modified 2012. (accessed October 23, 2013).

<http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/MS.MIL.XPND.GD.ZS>

contrast has continued to express a long term interest in the future of the Kyrgyz Republic on the apparent understanding that Kyrgyzstan only collaborate with Russia and reject the United States. As such, the Kyrgyz have decided to operate in their national interest by partnering with the regional powerhouse of the Russian Federation, opting not to collaborate with the United States.

## Chapter II: Research Design and Methodology

In understanding how Kyrgyz “national interest” was realized in relation to the Russian and United States’ bases located within Kyrgyz territory, I selected the case study technique as it allowed for the most logical means of comparing the divergent experiences of the U.S. and Russian bases. Comparing the two cases of the Kyrgyz Government’s treatment of the United States Transit Center at Manas and the Russian bases within Kyrgyzstan, highlights a key dissimilarity in how Kyrgyzstan dismissed the U.S. base while welcoming the Russian bases. This thesis examines whether this disparate treatment served Kyrgyzstan’s national interest.

To better understand the two cases, I consulted a wide array of resources in English and Russian. They consisted of news sources, think tank reports, academic studies and official government documents (including those disseminated by Wikileaks). The government reports included those quantifying the amounts of financial aid from Washington and Moscow, payments for the leasing of the bases, and the economic impact of trade in the Kyrgyz Republic.

I used the Realist lens when looking at Kyrgyzstan’s national interest, operationalizing “national interest” to mean that a country serving its “national interest” would seek to improve its defense capabilities, improve its financial situation and create a better political environment for itself. For a country to be serving its national interest, its decisions must seek to strengthen its position politically, improve its economy and secure its national defense.

Due to the mutually exclusive nature of the relationship that Russia demanded of Kyrgyzstan (in order to maintain Russian support Kyrgyzstan must expel the U.S. military base), it is in Kyrgyzstan’s national interest to forgo collaboration with the U.S. Transit Center at Manas and to preserve its strong ties to Moscow. In all three aspects of national interest that were

examined (political, military and economic), Russia evidently is the better partner to promote Kyrgyzstan's interests.

### Chapter III: Review of Literature

This chapter will examine existing scholarship and how different schools and theorists build upon each other in understanding “national interest.” Each scholar is identified by the school of thought that he represents, followed by a discussion of how this relates to other scholars’ views. The review seeks to provide a thorough discussion of the various understandings of “national interest” and to help clarify the gaps in scholarship.

What motivates a country to behave in one way or another has intrigued historians, political scientists, and philosophers since ancient times. Attempting to explain a country’s behavior using its “national interest” is more recent, yet still hotly contested. There is no one way of defining “national interest,” but several different schools of thought have garnered scholarly and popular attention.

This review of literature delves into both historical and contemporary views of “national interest” in order to allow for a fuller discussion of areas have yet to be explored and whether existent theories may contribute to a greater understanding of how “national interest” is realized in the context of the Kyrgyz Republic.

Even today, Hans Morgenthau, who “is widely considered ‘the founding father’” of the “realist school” of international relations is often cited source by scholars.<sup>4</sup> I use his definition of

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<sup>4</sup> Oliver, Juntersonke. Ethics & International Affairs, "Echoes of a Forgotten Past: Mid-Century Realism and the Legacy of International Law." Last modified February 13, 2013. (accessed October 22, 2013). <http://www.ethicsandinternationalaffairs.org/2013/echoes-of-a-forgotten-past-mid-century-realism-and-the-legacy-of-international-law/>.

“national interest” in interpreting Kyrgyz relations with the United States and Russian governments.

Like Hans Morgenthau’s assessment that national leaders “think and act in terms of interest as defined as power,”<sup>5</sup> Realist E.H. Carr in 1939 stated: “whatever moral issues may be involved, there is an issue of power which cannot be expressed in terms of morality.”<sup>6</sup> This differs somewhat from the assumptive approach promoted by Miroslav Ninicic in National Interest and Its Interpretation, which argues that despite several different understandings of the “assumptive approach,” the strongest one has its philosophical foundation in Realist thought. The assumptive approach holds that nations make several assumptions about national security, most importantly that anarchy is the predominant trait of global society; all nations must therefore seek to improve their security as the only legitimate way in which a country can serve its national interest. In order to achieve this, military force is at times required as a country seeks the “rational management of power.”<sup>7</sup>

Realists and neo-realists make several assertions that are distinctive about how superpowers prioritize their national interests. Though realists and neo-realists agree that the

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<sup>5</sup> Dougherty, James, and Robert Pflatzgraff. Contending Theories of International Relations: A Comprehensive Survey, 5th Edition. 1971. Reprint, Upper Saddle River: Pearson, 2000, p. 76.

<sup>6</sup> Merry, Robert. "Commentary: Kaplan and Mearsheimer: The Power of Realism. The National Interest. <http://nationalinterest.org/commentary/Kaplan-Mearsheimer-Power-Realism-6316> (accessed May 15, 2013).

<sup>7</sup> Nincic, Miroslav. "The National Interest and Its Interpretation." *The Review of Politics* 61 (1999): 29-55.

pursuit of power is what drives national interest, anarchy is what separates them. Specifically, neo-realists hold that because states wish to safeguard their security, in a globe filled with anarchy in international relations, they must always make the pursuit of power their priority; whereas the realists argue that the pursuit of power is the primordial desire of man.

Although this study focuses on Kyrgyzstan and whether its relationships with the United States and Russia are consistent with its national interest, one may still glean insight into the nature of those relationships by examining the points of view of the Russians and Americans. In Structural Realism after the Cold War, neo-realist theoretician Kenneth Waltz observes:

“...power, not very fungible for weak states, is very fungible for strong ones. The history of American foreign policy since World War II is replete with examples of how the United States used its superior economic capability to promote its political and security interests.”<sup>8</sup> Given this view of superpowers, one would expect Russia and the United States to both use their relative wealth and military capabilities to seek to exert influence over Kyrgyzstan in order to promote their own security interests. This raises the interesting question, though one the thesis explores, of whether a dependent, poorer state located near a superpower ever can act in its own national interests or if it just acts at the behest of those who help pay bills, guarantee stability, or champion interests; in this view, such states are dependent to the point that their “national interests” are determined by external actors, giving such states limited options to choose from.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Waltz, Kenneth. "Structural Realism after the Cold War." *International Security* 25, no. 1 (2000): 5-41.

<sup>9</sup> A case study could be conducted examining how the United States reacted to the internal affairs of Cuba since 1959 or Chile in 1973.

Neo-realist Stephen Walt's theory of "defensive realism" agrees with Waltz that national interest is the foremost priority of a country, although Walt maintains that defining exactly what these interests are is challenging. Writing in 2005, Walt considers the U.S. to be the world's only superpower. He argues that as the only superpower, the greatest concern of the United States is "nuclear terrorism" and other large scale problems that directly conflict with U.S. ability to exist are central; everything else that the country does overseas is a distant second. From this perspective, countries with no direct links to the U.S. would not be relevant to its "national interest."<sup>10</sup>

During the Al-Qaeda linked uprisings in Mali, for example, Walt posted an article on his website contending no vital western interest was involved. Instead, countries that chose to get involved in places like Mali decided to get involved first and then *post facto* found ways to justify their decision as having supported a vital interest. Although Mali was being overtaken by terrorists, Walt argued that that was not a U.S. problem, since the terrorists were not in direct conflict with its direct security concerns.<sup>11</sup>

Realists Michael Williams and B.C. Schmidt take aim at the general "neoconservative" notion that the United States is serving its national interest by seeking to make the world reflect

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<sup>10</sup> Walt, Stephen. "In the National Interest: A New Grand Strategy for American Foreign Policy." Boston Review, (2005).

[http://belfercenter.hks.harvard.edu/publication/640/in\\_the\\_national\\_interest.html](http://belfercenter.hks.harvard.edu/publication/640/in_the_national_interest.html) (accessed August 1, 2013).

<sup>11</sup> Walt, Stephen. "Is Mali Really a Vital Interest?" Foreign Policy.

[http://walt.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2013/01/17/maladroit\\_in\\_mali](http://walt.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2013/01/17/maladroit_in_mali) (accessed April 20, 2013).

American values. Specifically, the authors note that realist scholars such as George Kennan and Morgenthau had argued that such moralistic approaches are exactly what caused so many U.S. foreign policy blunders. Instead of the President of the United States' foreign policy decisions seeking to put United States interest first, there is a desire by some partisans to coopt the term "national interest" in order to inject "moral principles and values." By doing this, the scope of U.S. interest becomes global and always risks more foreign engagements.<sup>12</sup>

Neo-realist Joseph Grieco's view, according to Nincic, is that "the fundamental goal of all states in any relationship is to prevent others from achieving advances in their relative capabilities."<sup>13</sup> Evidence for this view can be seen in a state's effort to obstruct other states from obtaining comparable military power or economic leverage. This means that a country is acting more than just defensively to preserve its interest, but is actively seeking to suppress others in order to preserve its primacy.

Realist Arnold Wolfers in "National Security as an Ambiguous Symbol" criticizes what is a recurring theme: "national interest" like "national security" are ambiguous terms that different people frequently define in different ways. As such, it is quite conceivable that today's national interest will not align with tomorrow's. Equally, as other authors also have argued, this can lead to decisions being justified as, and not in response to, the national interest. Wolfers cites Morgenthau in asserting that one must consider the "perennial" interests of a nation-state, which

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<sup>12</sup> Schmidt, Brian C.; Williams, Michael C. "The Bush Doctrine and the Iraq War: Neoconservatives versus Realists" *Security Studies* 17.2 (2008).

<sup>13</sup> Nincic, Miroslav. "The National Interest and Its Interpretation." JSTOR. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1408647> (accessed January 15, 2013).

is “security based on power.”<sup>14</sup> In the context of Kyrgyzstan, it is important to ask whether Kyrgyzstan treated the American and Russian bases differently as a product of its national interest or doing so was a byproduct of other decisions. This raises the question of whether these decisions reflect part of a longer term, ongoing grand strategy or were made in a less systematic manner that suited current needs.

Miroslav Nincic discusses famed diplomat, Soviet expert, and classical realist George Kennan as having believed that studying U.S. international interests would be useless without first examining the domestic concerns of the United States and seeing its foreign policy as an extension of those interests. Obviously, national interest must relate to the focal country but Kennan explicitly states that all policy decisions should “...assure that we should be permitted, as a people, to continue our Pilgrim's progress toward a better America under the most favorable conditions with a minimum of foreign interference, and also with a minimum of inconvenience of provocation to the interests of other nations.”<sup>15</sup> It is important to note Kennan's pronouncement that foreign interference be kept to a minimum, as this is not something that one sees in the example of Kyrgyzstan.

Elected official and realist Nelson Rockefeller's 1951 article “Widening Boundaries of National Interest” does not dwell on how to best define “national interest”; rather he considers why the United States acted as it did in Europe during the post-World War II rebuilding efforts.

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<sup>14</sup> Wolfers, Arnold. “‘National Security’ as an Ambiguous Symbol.” *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 67, No. 4. (Dec., 1952), pp. 483-484.

<sup>15</sup> Nincic, Miroslav. *Democracy and Foreign Policy: The Fallacy of Political Realism*. New York: Columbia UP, 1992.

Rockefeller concludes that the United States' actions were not based upon an interest defined "in military or even political terms," but rather "squarely upon economic considerations."

Specifically, Rockefeller maintains that in assisting the rebirth and development of the post-World War II Europe the United States was in fact assisting itself as Europe's growth would be related to American growth.<sup>16</sup>

This differs greatly from views that expressly place security as the paramount concern. One could argue that perhaps Rockefeller's concerns with the economic rejuvenation of Europe was actually his underlying desire (like President Harry Truman and Secretary of State George Marshall) to prevent against the growth of communism. As such, by supporting the development of the European economies the U.S. was furthering its economic interests while also safeguarding itself in terms of military (Soviet) threat.<sup>17</sup>

A "national identity" approach utilizes psychological theories in order to understand why countries behave the way they do. Specifically, this approach holds that the "construct" of whom "we" are as a country leads "us" to act in the way that "we" believe "we" are prescribed to "think, feel, evaluate and ultimately behave in group-relevant situations." Based upon this, each state is acting out the role that it feels has been assigned to it by its position in the world.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Rockefeller, Nelson. "Widening Boundaries of National Interest. *Foreign Affairs*. 29, no. 4 (1951): 523-538. *Foreign Affairs*.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> Dougherty, James, and Robert Pflatzgraff. *Contending Theories of International Relations: A Comprehensive Survey*, 5th Edition. 1971. Reprint, Upper Saddle River: Pearson, 2000, p. 94.

Interestingly, Lerna K. Yanik's "constructivist" assertions about Turkish foreign policy show some overlap with the national identity approach. Yanik, in "Constructing Turkish 'Exceptionalism': Discourses of Liminality and Hybridity in Post-Cold War Turkish Foreign Policy," contends that Turkey fulfills self-realization as being the "bridge" of Eurasia. By projecting this image via geographical constructs, Turkey seeks to self-define its importance to the region.

Moreover, in this view, Turkey applies this same approach to its interpretation and application of lessons from its history. Turkey has built up the belief that the Ottoman Empire was a unique mediator in the region – a role that Turkey would like to reprise. Like modern Turkey, the Ottomans took the diverse religious and ethnic groups within the country as a clear indication of their good governance abilities and as a strong sign of the Empire's ability to achieve peace and order.

In September 2002, 33 American scholars of international relations signed an open letter in the New York Times stating that the impending war in Iraq was unnecessary and did not serve "America's national interest". The letter acknowledged that war is at times a tool that must be used to "advance U.S. national interests," but argued that despite Saddam Hussein's monstrous character and violations of U.N. Resolutions, the condition of "advancing U.S. national interest" would not be met by launching a war in Iraq.<sup>19</sup>

Realist Michael Williams seemed to affirm these unheeded warnings in the lead-up to the Iraq War when he wrote in 2005 that "the renewed relevance of classical realists such as

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<sup>19</sup> "War with Iraq is Not in America's National Interest." <http://www.bear-left.com/archive/2002/0926oped.html>. New York Times. 26 September 2002

Reinhold Niebuhr and Hans Morgenthau, whose thinking not only addressed themes at the heart of contemporary neo-conservatism, but who also provided prescient warnings of the dangerous directions in which neoconservative understandings of the national interest could lead.”<sup>20</sup>

In 2000, then-Senior Fellow at the Hoover Institution and Professor of Political Science at Stanford University Condoleezza Rice,<sup>21</sup> in her capacity as foreign policy advisor to Presidential Candidate George W. Bush<sup>22</sup> stated that though U.S. national interest is harder to define in the post-Soviet era, a Republican White House would maintain that several points remained the U.S.’s chief “national interests”: to ensure that the U.S. military can project enough power to act as a deterrent, promote economic growth, keep strong relations with likeminded countries, develop stronger relations with powerful nations that do not necessarily share American values, and deal swiftly with threats such as rogue regimes that may support terrorism.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Williams, Michael. "What is the National Interest? The Neoconservative Challenge in IR Theory." *European Journal of International Relations*.

<http://ejt.sagepub.com/content/11/3/307.abstract> (accessed July 12, 2013).

<sup>21</sup> Rice, Condoleezza. "Promoting the national interest," *Foreign Affairs*

Jan/Feb 2000, Volume: 79, Issue: 1

[http://www.mtholyoke.edu/~jwestern/ir319/condoleezza\\_rice.htm](http://www.mtholyoke.edu/~jwestern/ir319/condoleezza_rice.htm)

<sup>22</sup> CNN, “Condoleezza Rice Fast Facts.” (accessed September 25, 2013). Last edited July 8,

2013) <http://www.cnn.com/2013/07/08/us/condoleezza-rice-fast-facts/index.html>

<sup>23</sup> Rice, Condoleezza. “Promoting the National Interest.” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 79, No. 1

February/March 2000, pp. 45-62. (<http://www.jstor.org/stable/20049613>).

Rice's interpretation is not meant to be a theoretical framework, and it is hard to summarize her points into a litmus test of how something would make her list of "national interests." Though, this document is uniquely valuable in that Rice wrote what, as a practitioner, rather than a theoretician, she felt would be the best moves to support U.S. national interest, given her years of academic study. One can infer that national security, economics and political status are all represented, but it is not clear. Granted, Rice was writing the *Foreign Affairs* piece in the months before an election, so her objective was not to apply ideas as a scholar but rather to give some idea about what a George W. Bush administration would bring.

Even more interesting, after eight years of the Bush administration, Rice wrote a sequel for *Foreign Affairs*, apprising whether her assertions in the 2000 piece remained accurate. She notes: "we recognize that democratic state building is now an urgent component of our national interest."<sup>24</sup> Given the two regimes that she assisted in toppling, her emphasis on building democratic states is striking. Intriguingly, "democratic state building" is not an item that readily lends itself to a litmus test of national interests. Yet if one looks at state building in the broader context of keeping states stable so that rogue elements do not take over, and hence pose as a threat to the United States, it makes more sense.

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<sup>24</sup> Rice, Condoleezza, "Rethinking the National Interest: American Realism for a New World."

Foreign Affairs, Vol. 87, No. 4, July/August 2008, pp 2-26.

Realists B.C. Smith and Michael Williams, who have written a great deal about realist theory, in “The Bush Doctrine and the Iraq War: Neoconservatives Versus Realists,”<sup>25</sup> observe that neoconservatives see no benefit in having a balance of global power. As American neo-conservatives who view the United States as a benign power, they see no reason the world would benefit from a return to multi-polarity. Equally, such a return threatens American security interests, and so it is vital for the U.S. to maintain its role as the world’s only superpower.

Joseph Nye dissects the current state of global affairs, referring to realist thinker Samuel P. Huntington’s perspective that since the U.S. lacks a clear sense of national identity, it finds it impossible to fully articulate its national interests. Since The United States has not defined its national interests, “substantial commercial interests and transnational and non-national ethnic interests have come to dominate foreign policy.”<sup>26</sup> Indeed, this has a great deal in common with what those who champion National Identity say about how a country comes to identify its national interests.

Nye builds upon the concept of self-realization, saying that each country determines for itself what values it wishes to defend and to what point. He uses the example of the United States, which is democratic and respects human rights, reflecting the preferences and self-image of its populace. As such, supporting human rights and democracy internationally fits what the

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<sup>25</sup> Williams, Michael, and Brian Schmidt. "The Bush Doctrine and the Iraq War: Neoconservatives versus Realists." *Security Studies* 17 (2008): 191-220.

<sup>26</sup> Nye, Joseph. "Redefining National Interest." *Foreign Affairs*. 78, no. 4 (1999): 22-35.

American population expects of their country's government. This defines the interests that U.S. leaders then decide to fight for internationally.<sup>27</sup>

Aaron Belkin's interpretation of Jutta Weldes's "constructivist"<sup>28</sup> work on the Cuban Missile Crisis offers a psychological view of how countries make the decisions that they do in order to defend what they perceive as their "national interests." Weldes states that in the case of the Cuban Missile Crisis a type of groupthink came to prevail, using "security imagery." This was perpetuated by the overuse of clichéd expressions that convinced the American decision-makers of their righteousness and the apparent treachery of the Soviets (e.g., "Better dead than red"; "The Soviets are set on destroying the West"). This would mean that national interest is not necessarily determined by careful calculation, but rather by a distinctive tendency of organizational psychology.<sup>29</sup>

Nincic's own view, which frequently conflicts with realism, as expressed in "The National Interest and its Interpretation," is that three factors determine the national interest. First is the "principle of inclusiveness": states' claims of national interest should "transcend the specific interests of groups or factions," and the interest should be of concern nationwide, or to a very large subsection of the country's citizenry. Second is the "principle of exclusiveness"; a

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Weldes, Jutta. "Constructing National Interests: The United States and the Cuban Missile Crisis." *The American Political Science Review* 95 (2001):

1048.<http://ejt.sagepub.com/content/2/3/275.abstract>. (accessed October 26, 2013)

<sup>29</sup> Weldes, Jutta. "Constructing National Interests: The United States and the Cuban Missile Crisis." *The American Political Science Review* 95 (2001): 1048.

state should not act on the interests of any outside groups except when doing so would “affect domestic interests.” Nincic continues that it is a happy coincidence if this happens to benefit global welfare, but that is not the reason for the action or a guaranteed outcome of the action. Lastly, the claim should be of “external relevance,” which means that “the needs in question should “significantly be affected by the international environment and, consequently, by the conduct of foreign affairs.”<sup>30</sup>

James Chance agreed that policies are created as an extension of domestic interests. He argued that determining what is best for a country should be the primary interests of leaders and that these “interests, as far as justice and good faith permit, is, and ought to be, [the] prevailing one.”<sup>31</sup>

Like Chance, Robert Osgood believed that policy ought to be formulated based upon “the analysis of policy based on strong theoretical and historical concepts,” which contributed to the foundation of the “SAIS approach.”<sup>32</sup> In Osgood’s summary of the “enumerative approach”, the national interest is clear under two conditions. First, policy makers must articulate the objectives determining what the national interests are. Secondly, there should be an explicitly defined level

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<sup>30</sup> Nincic, Miroslav. "The National Interest and Its Interpretation." JSTOR.

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/1408647> (accessed January 15, 2013). P. 30.

<sup>31</sup> The National Interest, 1994

<http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.lib.vt.edu:8080/stable/pdfplus/40209341.pdf>

<sup>32</sup> The Osgood Center for International Studies. “About us.”

<http://www.osgoodcenter.org/about.php> (accessed October 26, 2013).

of engagement: at what point is the state is willing to take what actions to secure those interests?  
“The first condition is one of boundaries; the second is one of thresholds.”<sup>33</sup>

Osgood continued that aside from more quantitative means of understanding national interest, there is also a less tangible and more philosophical approach. Specifically, he argues that nations seek “prestige” and “national aggradation.” In this view, “national aggradation” is defined as “the increase of national power, wealth, and prestige.” Raymond Aron agrees with the enumerative approach, but he adds that the factor of seeking “glory” is an important one in how countries determine their national interest.<sup>34</sup> In the 1978 article “Defining our National Interest,” one sees evidence that history repeats itself as the author argues that friendship between superpowers and other countries results in the powerful nation telling “the others what is in their national interest.” The author aptly points out that the U.S. has always been eager to assist Latin American countries by not only conveying to them what their national interests are, but by being sure that those who do not comply “cannot remain in power for a long time.”<sup>35</sup>

The author explains that a mafia-like relationship existed between the Soviet Union and its allies, who were told that “friendship... with the Soviet Union accords to their national interest.”<sup>36</sup> Using the example of India, the author states that considering the global power status of the USSR coupled with the “military, political, and economic leverage that it has acquired” within India, it was not a hollow threat that those who did not go along with the Soviet narrative

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid. 40.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid. 44.

<sup>35</sup> "Defining Our National Interest." *Economic and Political Weekly* 13 (1978): 535-536.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

of what was in their national interests “[could not] remain in power for a long time.”<sup>37</sup> This supports the argument made by Paul Schroeder that there is a great deal of “bandwagoning”, in that weak states just go along with what the stronger states want. This is conducive to their interests at times as they cannot hope to directly compete with the more powerful nation.<sup>38</sup>

### *Conclusions*

North American scholars and foreign policy advisers have examined the definition and interpretation of the notion of “national interest” for over half a century, and no commonly agreed upon definition has emerged. The realist understanding of national interest continues to evolve. Specifically, Morgenthau’s classic statement of “national interest” (defined in terms of “power”) has not been expanded upon by more fully defining “power,” so that an outside observer could readily identify if a country acted in its national interest. This thesis seeks to help close the gap as to whether Morgenthau’s theory is as he stated, “universally valid”<sup>39</sup> in the case of a dependent country, such as Kyrgyzstan.

Morgenthau’s understanding of realism was selected as it is at the core of the 20<sup>th</sup> century’s pursuit of realist thought. Moreover from this realist school in the 20<sup>th</sup> century a number of different schools of international relations thought were born in response, including

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Dougherty, James, and Robert Pflatzgraff. *Contending Theories of International Relations: A Comprehensive Survey*, 5th Edition. 1971. Reprint, Upper Saddle River: Pearson, 2000, p. 76.

neo-realism/structural realism, defense realism, liberal realism, neoclassical realism, left realism and offensive realism. In contrast, the great deal of criticism of realism, by constructivists, post-realists and others emerged out of a rejection of the otherwise general support for various aspects of realism in contemporary thought.

Additionally, realism arguably remains relevant in the twenty-first century. For example, U.S. President Barack Obama is frequently described as a realist<sup>40</sup>; conversely, he is also at times criticized as not being a legitimate realist.<sup>41</sup> This is indicative of the fact that “realist” can be very challenging to define. Similarly, defining “national interest” as understood by “realists” is not a simple task. This thesis will seek to address the gap in literature as to how one defines a “realist’s” interpretation of “national interests” in the Kyrgyz context.

For the purposes of this thesis, I define a country working in its “national interest” as one that seeks to improve its defense capabilities, improve its financial situation and create a better political environment for itself. (See Table 1.)

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<sup>40</sup> Douthat, Ross. “Obama the Realist.” New York Times. February 6, 2011.

[http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/07/opinion/07douthat.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/07/opinion/07douthat.html?_r=0)

<sup>41</sup> Stewart, Patrick. “The Realist Idealist: Obama’s U.N. Speech.” The Internationalist. September 24, 2013. <http://blogs.cfr.org/patrick/2013/09/24/the-realist-idealist-obamas-un-speech/> (accessed on October 26, 2013)

### Table 1: Operationalizing “National Interest”

Definition: A country that serves its national interests will attempt to improve its defense capabilities, improve its financial situation and create a better political environment for itself. That is, for the categories of defense, politics and economics, a country either acts neutrally, or has the binary option of improving or worsening itself in each, and by seeking to better itself in all three, it is working in its national interest.

In making decisions, a country’s leaders can at times act neutrally in regards to its national interest. For instance, an agreement with a neighboring country on fishing licenses for a lake shared with its neighbor has little, if any, impact on the country’s defense, economy or politics. Yet a decision on arms deals, backing positions in the United Nations or creating a free trade zone on its border will likely have either a positive or negative effect on either or all of the country’s defense, political and economic interests. Hosting foreign military installations, the focus here, arguably has a large impact in all three categories.

Though some may believe that the inclusion of other issues, such as public health or environmental concerns could also be added to the *troika* of economics, political, and security in defining national interest, I contend that it is not a likely fit. Despite the fact that environmental issues can have an obvious transnational impact (e.g. the nuclear meltdown in Chernobyl, Ukraine affected all of Europe), the *intent* of the action (building the power plant) was not to have a transnational purpose; but rather to supply energy to north-central Ukraine. That being said, should a country’s actions overtly threaten its neighbor (e.g. radiation, acid rain, etc.), without abatement by the malefactor, it could be categorized under the component of “security”,

in regards to national interest, as the destructive effect against the environment is no different than the impact of a deliberate attack.

Likewise, if a country is neutrally not assisting in public health efforts, say by neglecting to collaborate in anti-plague efforts within its own territory, thereby causing problems for its neighbors, this is not a deliberate, commissioned, provocation against its neighbor's "national interest", but rather omitting to do what is "right" in the eyes of its neighbors. This would be different than threatening a neighbor's public health (and thereby security) by electing to specifically block vaccines to the country, or by doing chemical-weapons testing along the border – which would demonstrate the country's intended malfeasance. In both cases, these decisions would jeopardize the security of the neighboring country, and so operate against their national interest.

**Table 1: Supporting or Opposing “National interest”**

	<b>Economic</b>	<b>Political</b>	<b>Defense</b>
<b>Supports national interest</b>	Improves the country’s financial situation by multiple means: Lessens the national debt, improves trade, decreases unemployment, secures direct investment, increases foreign assistance, and develops new means of stimulating the economy	Improves the country’s political environment both internally, by giving legitimacy to the government and externally, by promoting the country’s interests abroad.	Improves the national defense capabilities by making the country’s defense apparatuses stronger and more able to fend off threats: domestic or international. Or, achieves military backing by an ally should a conflict arise.
<b>Opposes national interest</b>	Weakens the country’s financial standing by multiple means: Increases the national debt, decreases trade, raises unemployment, discourages direct investment, dampens foreign assistance, and opposes new means of stimulating the economy.	Opposes the country’s political environment both internally, by delegitimizing the government and externally, by thwarting the country’s interests abroad.	Weakens the national defense capabilities by making the country’s defense apparatuses weaker and less able to fend off either domestic or international threats. Alienates allies.

## Chapter IV: Results

In this chapter, an overview of the conclusions of this thesis is reviewed. As will be discussed, the Kyrgyz Republic operated in its “national interest” by keeping the Russian Federation’s military facilities while simultaneously expelling the United States’ Transit Center at Manas. The United States is evidently unwilling to provide more economic, political and military support than what the Russians have provided to the Kyrgyz. Moreover, the Kyrgyz strongly perceive that American interest in the region is Afghanistan-centric and that following the announced 2014 withdrawal of American troops U.S. interest in the region will wane.

As will be shown later in this thesis, the Russian Federation has routinely championed Kyrgyz interest and has also made it well-known that this support is contingent on Bishkek’s clear support for Moscow’s interests in the region. In contrast, the United States has been less transparent about its objectives in either the short or long term, and it has issued no evident ultimatums to Bishkek. Thus, Kyrgyzstan’s ongoing movement towards Russia’s sphere of influence does not contradict, but arguably sustains Kyrgyz national interest following the realist understanding.

Russia is the dominant actor in the Kyrgyz economy and economic life. In the categories of import and export trade, financial assistance, direct investment, loan forgiveness, loan giving, remittances, and contracts, the Russians far exceed what the Americans provide. Only in the case of actual rent for their respective bases do the Russians pay less, but this amount is negligible when considered against the backdrop of total economic impact. Moreover, Russia has invited Kyrgyzstan to join the Moscow-led Eurasian Economic Union.

In the political life of Kyrgyzstan, the United States has had virtually no role in Kyrgyzstan's domestic politics. Conversely, Russia moved quickly to meet with and back the new government after the Kyrgyz April 2010 Revolution and also guaranteed tens of millions of dollars of financial assistance. This act of assurance added legitimacy to the revolutionaries' claims to be the lawful government. The only U.S. assistance to Kyrgyzstan politically was not endorsing Kyrgyzstan's rival for a rotating seat on the U.N. Security Council in 2011, which the U.S. likely used to punish the opponent, rather than to vote in favor of Kyrgyzstan.

In the sphere of national defense, the Kyrgyz military has benefited from the large amounts of military hardware and the promised training from Russia. Additionally, Russia has made clear that it views the regional security of Central Asia as a high priority. Kyrgyzstan is also a member of the Collective Security Treaty Organization, a collective defense organization of former Soviet states that have pledged that an attack "against one" is tantamount to "an attack against all." Despite this, in June 2010 Russia did not act to quell internal riots in Kyrgyzstan. Russia justified this by observing that it was a domestic matter. For its part, the United States has not made any notable contributions to Kyrgyzstan's defense.

Given these facts, the Kyrgyz Republic is operating in its national interest by expelling the American military facility while retaining the Russian military facilities: the arrangement grants Kyrgyzstan more political, economic and national defense benefits than permitting both or allowing neither. The Kyrgyz Republic's prospects of receiving substantial long term support from the United States are bleak, whereas Russia has continuously expressed a strong interest in maintaining very close relations.

## Chapter V: Discussion

### *In the beginning*

This chapter is subdivided into the introduction, then an overview of Kyrgyz history, followed by three major sections, comprising of the three components of national interest: economic, political and defense. The essential question of this thesis is whether the Kyrgyz Republic seeks to improve its defense capabilities, fortify its economy and improve its position politically, and thereby serve its national interest consistent with the realist understanding of national interest. Looking at the cases of the United States and Russian Federation bases in Kyrgyzstan is one way to address this question. Why Kyrgyzstan treats the American and the Russian military installations differently is something that I will show is a product of the Kyrgyz drive to fulfill its national interest. In return for its uncompromising support of Russia the Kyrgyz achieve a great deal of backing from the Russians in all three spheres examined.

Importantly, Russia demands not just support from the Kyrgyz, but also fidelity. Russia implicitly makes clear that Moscow's strong patronage of the Kyrgyz would cease should Kyrgyzstan allow the Americans to continue to operate the Transit Center at Manas. This means that Kyrgyzstan must carefully analyze the pluses and minuses afforded it by both the United States and the Russian Federation in order to decide to which it will give its loyalty. In order to fully understand the reasons for these arrangements one must first briefly consider Kyrgyzstan's history.

## *Overview of the historical context of Kyrgyzstan*

The Kyrgyz Republic is a poor post-Soviet country located in the heart of Central Asia's Tien Shian Mountain range. Bordering China, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, it is within five hundred miles of Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan, the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, Russia, the Caspian Sea and the Aral Sea. In ancient times the Silk Road connected Europe and Asia, and today remains the bridge between the European West, Oriental East and Islamic South. Though remote from the centers of Eurasian civilization, the convergence of diverse cultures and religions and of strategic land masses has meant the region at certain points in history exercised influence over the entire world.

Kyrgyzstan historically looked to the East: Genghis Khan, Babur and Tamerlane all spent significant time in what is now Kyrgyzstan. Kyrgyzstan underwent a dramatic turn to the Northwest in 1775 when it established diplomatic relations with the Russian Empire of Tsarina Catherine the Great. In 1876 the territory of Kyrgyzstan was annexed into the Tsarist Empire until the Red Revolution of 1917. Following the revolution, the territory of Kyrgyzstan remained part of the Russian Soviet Socialist Republic and it began its journey toward becoming a country: the area formally became the Turkestan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic in 1918, then the Kara-Kirghiz Autonomous Oblast<sup>42</sup> in 1924, the Kirghiz Autonomous Oblast' in 1925 and finally the Kirghiz Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic in 1926, all under the Russian Soviet Socialist Republic.

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<sup>42</sup> An "Oblast" is an administrative unit analogous to that of an American "state".

As a result of Soviet Premier Joseph Stalin's 1936 National Delimitation campaign, it was decided to make Kyrgyzstan something that it had never been during its thousands of years of history: a nation-state, which was to be called the Kirghiz Soviet Socialist Republic (KSSR). This lasted until 1991 when the KSSR would finally become a fully sovereign and independent nation, the Kyrgyz Republic, for the first time in its history.

By the end of the Soviet period, many Republics and satellite states had begun to make move toward national sovereignty. The Solidarity Movement was gaining power in Poland, the governments of Hungary and Czechoslovakia had violently put down protests and the Baltic States had ongoing protests against the illegal Soviet occupation. This was not the case in Kyrgyzstan.

To gauge and counter rising anti-Soviet sentiments, Premier Mikhail Gorbachev spearheaded a national referendum on March 17, 1991 asking voters whether they believed that keeping the Soviet Union, albeit reformed, would be the best course of action.<sup>43</sup> Nationalist spirit was so strong in parts of the Soviet Union that the Republics of Georgia, Armenia, Latvia,

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<sup>43</sup> The actual question (in Russian and in English translation) is quite ambiguous. The question read, "Do you consider necessary the preservation of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics as a renewed federation of equal sovereign republics, in which the rights and freedoms of an individual of any nationality will be fully guaranteed?" Taken from <http://www.answers.com/topic/referendum-of-march-1991>

Lithuania, Estonia and Moldova boycotted the vote. In the Kyrgyz Soviet Socialist Republic the vote was held and an overwhelming 92.9% of voters voted to remain part of the Soviet Union.<sup>44</sup>

More than twenty years have passed, and Kyrgyzstan is the only country to host both an American military facility (known as the Transit Center at Manas,<sup>45</sup> formerly called the “Ganci Air Base” and then the “Manas Air Base”) and an agreed five Russian military facilities: the Kant Air Base, a Naval training and research center, two seismic observation facilities and an “anti-terrorism center” that has yet to be constructed.

Balancing the military bases of two great powers was an intriguing situation, but apparently untenable; as during the investigation and writing of this thesis Kyrgyzstan made the final decision about the American Transit Center at Manas:

The President of Kyrgyzstan on Wednesday signed a bill finalizing the closure next July of a U.S. airbase that has been a key hub for troops and supplies moving to and from Afghanistan since shortly after 9/11.

One day earlier, visiting Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu assured President Almazbek Atambayev that plans to provide the Central Asian country

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<sup>44</sup>RIA Novosti. "Referendum on the preservation of the USSR." RIA Novosti.

<http://www.en.rian.ru/infographics/20110313/162959645.html#plus/20049361.pdf> (accessed February 20, 2013).

<sup>45</sup> Mana is a mythical Kyrgyz leader who united the forty nomadic Kyrgyz tribes in order to fight off enemies of the Kyrgyz people.

with Russian weaponry and military equipment next year were being speeded up, and that the supplies would now begin to flow later this year.

The timing of the two developments reflected, yet again, the role Moscow has been playing for years in trying to expel the Americans from the Manas Transit Center, a base some 15 miles north of the Kyrgyz capital, Bishkek.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Goodenough, Patrick. "Putin Succeeds in Getting Kyrgyzstan to Close a Key U.S. Airbase | CNS News." CNS News. <http://www.cnsnews.com/news/article/putin-succeeds-getting-kyrgyzstan-close-key-us-airbase#sthash.yk8iYPBy.dpuf> (accessed June 29, 2013).

## Kyrgyz Economy

The first factor of national interest considered is the strong economic relationship between the Russian and the Kyrgyz economies. This subsection discusses that though the Kyrgyz Republic's economic situation is gloomy; Russia has continued to lead the charge in trade and financial assistance to Kyrgyzstan; whereas the United States is more of a minor player in the Kyrgyz economy. As per the criteria used in defining national interest in Table 1, Russia's positive economic impact on Kyrgyzstan can be measured in the billions of dollars, whereas the impact of the United States on the Kyrgyz economy is a mere fraction of Russia's. Despite ongoing multinational trade, the Kyrgyz Republic is still economically depressed.

Kyrgyzstan suffers from chronic economic problems, partially related to its landlocked geographic position. The Central Intelligence Agency's World Factbook reports that in 2012 Kyrgyzstan's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) at Purchasing Power Parity (PPP)<sup>47</sup> was \$13.5 billion, placing 144th place globally, between Kosovo and Niger.<sup>48</sup>

A sunnier picture is seen when considering the national budget deficit: it is only - 3.5% (133<sup>rd</sup> in the world). By comparison United States fares worse with a - 6.9% deficit (187<sup>th</sup>).<sup>49</sup> In

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<sup>47</sup> Gross Domestic Product by Purchasing Power Parity (GDP-PPP) is the sum value of all goods and services produced in the country valued at prices prevailing in the United States",

<sup>48</sup> Central Intelligence Agency. "Kyrgyzstan." World Factbook. cia.gov (accessed August 15, 2013).

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

the near term Kyrgyzstan is likely to see a widening of the budget deficit since it's the national economic growth rate in 2013 was estimated to be -0.90% (196<sup>th</sup> in the world).<sup>50</sup>

Considering that 20.8% of the GDP is in the agricultural sector and only 6.38% of the country's land is arable, it is perhaps surprising that 48% of the country's population still works in agriculture. In comparison industry makes up a 23.3% of GDP. In 2012, the Industrial Production Growth Rate (i.e. how quickly industries are growing in the country) was -20% (3<sup>rd</sup> worst in the world, directly above Syria and Sudan but right below Eritrea).<sup>51</sup>

Russia and the United States have maintained two very different policies in their economic relations with Kyrgyzstan. Aside from payment for their respective bases, the Americans have tended to support no-strings-attached development projects in Kyrgyzstan via the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) whereas the Russians have instead favored a carrot-and-stick mode of operation, whereby numerous incentives were given for following the Russian line. As will be discussed below, the example of Tajikistan demonstrates that the Russians do not hesitate to harshly punish and make examples of countries that try to play by their own rules. Kyrgyzstan has not forgotten this lesson.

### *Remittances to Kyrgyzstan*

Operating in one's economic "national interest" extends beyond proactively seeking-out avenues for economic growth. It also includes actively seeking to avoid conflicts or potential

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<sup>50</sup>Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

interruptions to economic stability. As the United States government-financed Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty has reported, "...remittances from Russia [are] vital to Kyrgyz stability."<sup>52</sup> Roughly 20% of Kyrgyz citizens (800,000-1 million) work in the Russian Federation as migrant workers. This labor produces 30% of Kyrgyzstan's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) according to the World Bank and totaled \$ 1.758 billion in 2012.<sup>53</sup> According to the United Nations, Kyrgyzstan is the fourth highest remittance-recipient country in the world.<sup>54</sup> As is seen in Table 1, the financial revenue due to remittance would certainly go into the category of "improves the country's financial situation".

The economic impact of Kyrgyz immigrants to the United States is minor. Though there are no specific hard numbers of remittances, one can look at the rate of Kyrgyz migration, which creates the opportunity for remittances. During FY 2010, the U.S. Embassy in Bishkek received 4,651 applications for the Diversity Visa Program (i.e. the Green Card Lottery). In 2012, it

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<sup>52</sup> Najibullah, Farangis. "Remittances From Russia Vital To Kyrgyz Stability." Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty.

[http://www.rferl.org/content/remittances\\_from\\_russia\\_vital\\_to\\_kyrgyz\\_stability/2247092.html](http://www.rferl.org/content/remittances_from_russia_vital_to_kyrgyz_stability/2247092.html) (accessed August 30, 2013).

<sup>53</sup> World Bank. "Kyrgyz Republic." The World Bank. <http://data.worldbank.org/country/kyrgyz-republic> (accessed August 30, 2013).

<sup>54</sup> Andrysiak, Artur. "Statistical issues in estimating remittances in the CIS Countries – example of Kyrgyz Republic example of Kyrgyz Republic." United Nations.

[www.un.org/en/development/desa/policy/publications/general\\_assembly/eitconference/2aprpm\\_andrysiak.pdf](http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/policy/publications/general_assembly/eitconference/2aprpm_andrysiak.pdf) (accessed August 25, 2013).

received 7,761 applications, of this number, only a fraction received American visas. There are no data about the economic impact of remittances from visa winners has been for Kyrgyzstan but the fewer than 8,000 winners a year are unlikely to be responsible for more than a small sliver of GDP.

In contrast to the United States, Russia has not hesitated to focus on the dire economic situation and high dependence on migrant workers travelling to the Russian Federation in order to achieve its political and economic objectives in the region. According to a United Nations study, Kyrgyz neighbor Tajikistan places first in the world for the impact of remittances, at 36% of GDP.<sup>55</sup> The Russian Federation understands that Tajikistan (like Kyrgyzstan) is quite dependent on guest workers in Russia. In terms of supporting its national interest, Tajikistan offers an interesting lesson about what happens to Central Asian nations that are highly dependent on remittances from Russia that decide to not cooperate with orders from Moscow.

In 2011, two ethnic-Russian pilots working for a Russian transport company were arrested for smuggling and other crimes when they were forced to land in Tajikistan following mechanical problems during a flight from Afghanistan to Russia. Despite Moscow's multiple requests that the pilots be released to Russia immediately, on November 8, 2011 the pilots were convicted and sentenced to eight-and-a-half years in prison.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>55</sup>Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Najibullah, Farangis. "Politicians Say Moscow Should 'Take Revenge' Against Dushanbe over Sentencing of Pilots." Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty. (accessed May 10, 2013).

[http://www.rferl.org/content/politicians\\_say\\_moscow\\_should\\_take\\_revenge\\_against\\_dusanbe/24386074.html](http://www.rferl.org/content/politicians_say_moscow_should_take_revenge_against_dusanbe/24386074.html)

In what appeared to be a calculated response, on November 14, 2011 Russia's Chief Medical Officer Gennady Onischenko voiced concern that Tajik workers in Russia might be carrying the HIV virus and tuberculosis and thus were active threats to the general Russian public; therefore "the most natural decision is to ban Tajik labor immigration – until there is a tolerable health situation in Tajikistan..."<sup>57</sup> Two days later Russia intensified its pressure Dushanbe and began to crack down on Tajik laborers in Moscow, arresting at least 300 Tajik guest workers.<sup>58</sup> Simultaneously, Kremlin-backed youth groups began protests in Moscow in front of the Tajik Embassy.<sup>59</sup> By November 22, 2011 Tajik officials decided to release the Russian pilots.<sup>60</sup>

Russia used the country's dependence on migrant-remittances again in October 2012 after Tajikistan had second thoughts on an already agreed upon extension of Russia's lease on its military bases through 2042. The bases house Russia's 201<sup>st</sup> Division, which historically has secured the border between Tajikistan and Afghanistan. As Andronik Derenikyan of the

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<sup>57</sup> BBC. "Tajikistan releases Russian and Estonian pilots." BBC News.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-15835483> (accessed August 30, 2013).

<sup>58</sup> Russia Today. "Russia to deport Tajik immigrants over jailed pilot case" RT News.

<http://rt.com/news/prime-time/tajikistan-russia-pilots-swap-105/> (accessed August 30, 2013).

<sup>59</sup> Schwirtz, Michael. "Unhappy With Verdict in Tajikistan, Russia Targets Migrants." The New York Times. [http://www.nytimes.com/2011/11/17/world/europe/russia-rounding-up-tajik-workers.html?pagewanted=all&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/11/17/world/europe/russia-rounding-up-tajik-workers.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0) (accessed August 30, 2013).

<sup>60</sup> BBC. "Tajikistan releases Russian and Estonian pilots." BBC News.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-15835483> (accessed August 30, 2013).

Moscow-based Association of Border Protection stated: “The Russian military presence in the region is vitally important for both Russia and Tajikistan... The region faces numerous threats, among which are Islamist radicalization and geopolitical ambitions of strong powers interested in destabilization and even dissolution of certain countries.”<sup>61</sup> By April 2013, Tajik leader Emomali Rahmon voiced concern about the agreement, and Western analysts speculated that “...Tajikistan may be delaying the ratification of the basing agreement in an attempt to extract further last minute concessions.”<sup>62</sup>

The Jamestown Foundation, a respected Russia-watching think tank based in Washington, D.C. stated:

In retaliation for failing to sign the basing agreement, Russia has resorted to threatening Tajikistani migrant laborers. On April 14, [2013] Russian border officials inspected trains from Tajikistan carrying migrant workers and allegedly discovered many health and sanitary violations (BBC Tajiki, April 15). Russian

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<sup>61</sup>Parshin, Konstantin. "Tajikistan: Is Dushanbe Setting New Conditions for Russia's Military Presence?" EurasiaNet. <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/66789> (accessed August 5, 2013).

<sup>62</sup> Vinson, James. “About Us Programs Regions Press Multimedia Archives Store Russo-Tajik Relations Cool Over Failure to Ratify Basing Agreements.” Jamestown Foundation. [www.jamestown.org/single/?no\\_cache=1&tx\\_ttnews%5Bsword%5D=8fd5893941d69d0be3f378576261ae3e&tx\\_ttnews%5Bany\\_of\\_the\\_words%5D=PKK&tx\\_ttnews%5Bpointer%5D=6&tx\\_ttnews%5Btt\\_news%5D=40835&tx\\_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=7&cHash=78b9b2409273c1e17ca39245b5f66378#.UhjtQRushcY](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5Bsword%5D=8fd5893941d69d0be3f378576261ae3e&tx_ttnews%5Bany_of_the_words%5D=PKK&tx_ttnews%5Bpointer%5D=6&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=40835&tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=7&cHash=78b9b2409273c1e17ca39245b5f66378#.UhjtQRushcY) (accessed August 29, 2013).

Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin reportedly declared that the trains pose “a serious threat to the sanitary health of the whole nation” and should “never be allowed into Russia” (RIA Novosti, April 16). This incident sparked a diplomatic and public backlash in Tajikistan followed by a fresh volley of criticism from Russia, including an episode of the Russian television show “Special Correspondent” entitled “Satan Train,” which was not received well in the Tajikistani media (Ozodagon, April 25; BBC Tajik, April 24; Millat, April 20).

Additionally, in a television appearance on April 18, Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, State Duma deputy and leader of the nationalist Liberal Democratic Party of Russia, lambasted Tajikistan’s recalcitrance, threatening that if the Central Asian republic does not approve the agreement, “we [Russia] will not let any more migrant workers in. Then what will Rahmon, the leader of this country, do? He knows all too well that, in this event, work will dry up. Afghan Islamists will overrun the country and hang him in the center of town just like [Mohammad] Najibullah [former president of Afghanistan installed in the 1980s by the Soviet Union].”<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Vinson, James. “About Us Programs Regions Press Multimedia Archives Store Russo-Tajik Relations Cool Over Failure to Ratify Basing Agreements.” Jamestown Foundation.

[www.jamestown.org/single/?no\\_cache=1&tx\\_ttnews%5Bsword%5D=8fd5893941d69d0be3f378576261ae3e&tx\\_ttnews%5Bany\\_of\\_the\\_words%5D=PKK&tx\\_ttnews%5Bpointer%5D=6&tx\\_ttnews%5Btt\\_news%5D=40835&tx\\_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=7&cHash=78b9b2409273c1e17ca39245b5f66378#.UhjtQRushcY](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5Bsword%5D=8fd5893941d69d0be3f378576261ae3e&tx_ttnews%5Bany_of_the_words%5D=PKK&tx_ttnews%5Bpointer%5D=6&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=40835&tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=7&cHash=78b9b2409273c1e17ca39245b5f66378#.UhjtQRushcY) (accessed August 29, 2013).

Given this pressure and overt threat to its migrant workers, the Tajik President reconsidered his country's "hard ball" negotiating strategy and decided to concede to Russia's bases, as had earlier been agreed. As Russian Member of Parliament Zhirnovsky relates, Russia is a key force not only in providing jobs for Tajiks, but also in supporting the security of the Tajik state against destabilizing elements. The Tajik President also likely took to heart Zhirnovsky's subtle reminder of Najibullah's public castration and lynching that came following a discontinuation of Soviet backing.

The United States has no such favorable leverage vis-à-vis remittances. The number of jobs provided to Kyrgyz due to migration to the United States is negligible. In contrast the number of Kyrgyz living in Russia is substantial, and their remittances are vital for the survival of the Kyrgyz economy. Moreover, if Russia were to expel the Kyrgyz workers, aside from an overnight decline of GDP by 30%, the mass influx of 20% more people<sup>64</sup> would be a shock to Kyrgyzstan. Two major incidents since 1990 demonstrate that many young people with no jobs and few prospects produce a real potential for political instability and violence. Like Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan is not in a favorable negotiating position with Moscow.

*Putting cash into Kyrgyzstan: A money pit?*

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<sup>64</sup> World Bank. "Kyrgyz Republic." The World Bank. <http://data.worldbank.org/country/kyrgyz-republic> (accessed August 30, 2013).

Kyrgyz leaders have experienced firsthand the benefits associated with being friends with Russia; they also have known the swift and bitter pain that comes from disappointing Moscow. The Russian Federation has been quite magnanimous in its financial bargaining with the Kyrgyz Republic, especially in terms of loan and debt forgiveness. While in Moscow for talks with his Russian counterparts in 2009, Kyrgyz President Kurmanbek Bakiev announced that the Russians had offered Kyrgyzstan an incredible financial bouquet of: a \$2 billion loan, a \$150 million gift and the complete forgiveness of debts to Moscow (\$180 million), a total package amounting to more than 50% of Kyrgyz GDP.<sup>65</sup> Although both Russia and Kyrgyzstan denied any link, President Bakiev announced the very same day that the U.S. Air Force base in Kyrgyzstan would be closed.

Upon receipt of an initial \$300 million from Moscow, Bakiev decided to renegotiate the rent for the U.S. base, seeking a nearly three-fold increase. Having sealed the deal with the Americans and having double-crossed the Russians, Bakiev sought to play the Americans and Russians off of one another for his financial benefit.<sup>66</sup> This decision seriously set back Kyrgyz-

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<sup>65</sup> Weir, Fred. "Kyrgyzstan: U.S. base closure 'final'." *The Christian Science Monitor*.

<http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Global-News/2009/0206/kyrgyzstan-us-base-closure-final> (accessed August 30, 2013).

<sup>66</sup> Cooley, Alexander. "Manas Hysteria." *Foreign Policy*.

[http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/04/12/manas\\_hysteria](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/04/12/manas_hysteria) (accessed August 30, 2013).

Russian relations, and within months Bakiev was swept from power by a coup that many assert was Russian-backed.<sup>67</sup>

When it was time to negotiate the renewal of the Russian base in 2012, the Kyrgyz-Russian agreement allowed the bases to remain in Kyrgyzstan for an additional 15 years starting in 2017. Kyrgyz Finance Minister Olga Lavrova stated that Russia would grant 100% loan forgiveness, albeit gradually: “part of the sum in the amount of \$189 million will be fully written off in a lump sum... The other part in the amount of \$300 million will be written off in annual installments beginning from 2016.”<sup>68</sup> Perhaps Kyrgyzstan considered the example of Tajikistan, which had its \$242 million debt wiped away by the Russians after agreeing to allow Russia to keep bases in Tajikistan.<sup>69</sup>

Apart from the issue of military bases, the United States and Russia have also maintained different investment strategies the Kyrgyz Republic. The Russian Federation has taken a strong interest in directly investing cash into industry and infrastructure projects. In contrast, the United

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<sup>67</sup> Pan, Philip P. "Russia is said to have fueled unrest in Kyrgyzstan." *The Washington Post*. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/04/11/AR2010041103827.html> (accessed August 30, 2013).

<sup>68</sup> Agence France Presse. "Russia To Keep Kyrgyzstan Military Base, Forgive Debt." *Defense News*. <http://www.defensenews.com/article/20120920/DEFREG03/309200007/Russia-Keep-Kyrgyzstan-Military-Base-Forgive-Debt> (accessed August 30, 2013).

<sup>69</sup> Kazantsev, Andrei. "RIAC: Russian military base in Tajikistan is most of all needed to ensure the security of Tajikistan itself." *Russian International Affairs Council*. [http://russiancouncil.ru/en/inner/?id\\_4=270#top](http://russiancouncil.ru/en/inner/?id_4=270#top) (accessed August 30, 2013).

States traditionally has favored sharing technical knowledge via the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), at the cost of \$40-50 million a year.<sup>70</sup>

Aside from encouraging economic growth, USAID's other projects in Kyrgyzstan are in the spheres of public health and democratic governance. To promote economic growth the Agency works through its Local Development Project, which does not directly invest in the local economy or infrastructure, but rather

...is designed to stimulate rapid, diversified, and sustainable economic growth by supporting local economic development in the Kyrgyz Republic. The project works with 24 partner municipalities, towns, and villages throughout country that were competitively selected. USAID's assistance focuses on improving local governments' capacity to provide citizen services and promote economic growth at the local level. Under USAID's REFORMA project, assistance is provided in various economic policy areas, including taxation, trade, and licensing.<sup>71</sup>

Russia has pursued its more hands-on approach to direct investment in Kyrgyz development in several ways. One of the major infrastructure projects, which included the Kambarata-1 Hydroelectric Dam, was conceived during Soviet era and has been an ongoing hope

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<sup>70</sup>European Times. "USAID Long-Term Partner for Kyrgyz Private Sector." European Times. <http://www.european-times.com/sector/finance-consulting/usaid/> (accessed August 30, 2013).

<sup>71</sup> "Donors Kyrgyzstan." Donors. [http://www.donors.kg/en/donors/usaid\\_eng](http://www.donors.kg/en/donors/usaid_eng). Kyrgyz Government. (accessed August 30, 2013).

for turning Kyrgyzstan into a major regional energy exporter. The investment costs for the projects could reach \$ 3 billion (more than 60% of the Kyrgyz GDP); it would be built by the Russian government-owned RusHydro Company. Kyrgyzstan would then pay back the construction costs to the Russians by transferring 75% of all profits to Moscow until the loan was paid off, at which time profits would be split evenly between the two countries.<sup>72</sup> Because Kyrgyzstan needs both a revenue-maker and a source of electricity, the dam project could be a huge coup for the Kyrgyz.

Russia is also the primary vendor of fuel to the Kyrgyz, and 60% of its exports to Kyrgyzstan are fuel.<sup>73</sup> In 2012, Kyrgyzstan's natural gas reliance took a strong turn towards Moscow when Kyrgyzstan's debt-laden, 87% government-owned gas company,<sup>74</sup> KyrgyzGaz,

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<sup>72</sup>Rickleton, Chris. "Kyrgyzstan: Bishkek's Hydropower Hopes Hinge on Putin's Commitment." EurasiaNet. <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/66883> (accessed August 30, 2013).

<sup>73</sup> Rahat, Rahat. "Expanding Russian influence in Kyrgyzstan." Neweurasia.net . <http://www.neweurasia.net/business-and-economics/expanding-russian-influence-in-kyrgyzstan/> (accessed August 30, 2013).

<sup>74</sup> Associated Press. "Russia's Gazprom to buy Kyrgyz state gas company." Yahoo! News. <http://news.yahoo.com/russias-gazprom-buy-kyrgyz-state-gas-company-134543898--finance.html> (accessed August 30, 2013).

was sold to the Russian government's Gazprom for \$ 1.<sup>75</sup> In exchange Gazprom stated that it intended to invest \$679 million into Kyrgyzstan's gas infrastructure over the next five years.<sup>76</sup>

The United States has not expressed interest in physically building-up the Kyrgyz energy infrastructure, though the AID Central Asian information sheet acknowledges that "Kyrgyzstan's limited energy resources threaten to hold back the country's economic growth. To facilitate the development of regional electricity markets in Central Asia, USAID helps reform the country's electricity system and devises policies to mitigate energy shortages."<sup>77</sup>

Other Russian projects include a large stake in the Kyrgyz government-owned Dastan Torpedo Plant located at Lake Issyk-Kul. The Soviet-era Dastan Plant has been a long time want

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<sup>75</sup>Fergana International Information Agency. "Russia's Gazprom buys KyrgyzGaz State Co for "\$1"." Fergana News. <http://enews.fergananews.com/news.php?id=2677> (accessed August 30, 2013).

<sup>76</sup> Associated Press. "Russia's Gazprom to buy Kyrgyz state gas company." Yahoo! News. <http://news.yahoo.com/russias-gazprom-buy-kyrgyz-state-gas-company-134543898--finance.html> (accessed August 30, 2013).

<sup>77</sup> "Central Asian Republics' Country Profile." United States Agency for International Development. <http://centralasia.usaid.gov/kyrgyzstan/country-profile> (accessed August 30, 2013).

of the Russian government as it produces the super-fast VA-111 Shkval underwater rocket.<sup>78</sup>  
Russian expenditures while using this facility will result in a net gain for the local population.

American business presence in Kyrgyzstan is conspicuous by its absence. Bishkek's American Chamber of Commerce's website only shows three American companies as members: Hyatt Hotel, Microsoft Avon Cosmetics and Coca-Cola Bottlers.<sup>79</sup> Upon further examination, Hyatt and Coca-Cola Bottlers are not franchised by Americans, but rather by Turkish investors.<sup>80</sup> Interestingly, the Hyatt Hotel was formerly the famous Soviet Hotel Bishkek, which famed Italian businessman Giorgio Fiacconi bought, remodeled and sold to the current Hyatt owners.<sup>81</sup> No records could be found for Avon Cosmetics, but it seems probable that it is a

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<sup>78</sup> Weir, Fred. "Russia bolsters influence in Kyrgyzstan as U.S. nears airbase exit." *The Christian Science Monitor*. <http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Europe/2012/0920/Russia-bolsters-influence-in-Kyrgyzstan-as-US-nears-airbase-exit> (accessed August 30, 2013).

<sup>79</sup> United States Embassy Bishkek. "Doing Business in the Kyrgyz Republic: 2009 Country Commercial Guide for U.S. Companies" [http://bishkek.usembassy.gov/uploads/images/hvhbIfDMcIvZcmTXKEHbg/Country\\_Commercial\\_Guide\\_2009.pdf](http://bishkek.usembassy.gov/uploads/images/hvhbIfDMcIvZcmTXKEHbg/Country_Commercial_Guide_2009.pdf) (accessed August 30, 2013)

<sup>80</sup> American Chamber of Commerce "Corporations" [http://www.amcham.kg/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=25&Itemid=25&lang=en](http://www.amcham.kg/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=25&Itemid=25&lang=en) (accessed August 30, 2013)

<sup>81</sup> Erkebaev, Askar. "A Pressure-Resistant Entrepreneur in Kyrgyzstan." *Transitions Online*. <http://www.tol.org/client/article/23067-a-pressure-resistant-entrepreneur-in-kyrgyzstan.html> (accessed August 30, 2013).

member of the American Chamber since it is an American-owned company that sells merchandise in Kyrgyzstan. Microsoft has been involved in some antipiracy prosecutions in Kyrgyzstan, though it does not have a physical office in Central Asia.<sup>82</sup>

According to Customs data from the United States Embassy's website, the Kyrgyz Customs authorities report that goods worth \$188.16 million are imported annually from the U.S. and \$90.77 million of goods are exported to the US. These numbers contrast sharply with U.S. Customs Service records that show that the U.S. imports \$3.90 million annually from Kyrgyzstan, whereas the US exports \$78.36 million to the Kyrgyz Republic.<sup>83</sup> According to "Doing Business in the Kyrgyz Republic: 2009 Commercial Guide for U.S. Companies," available on the U.S. Embassy Bishkek's website: "U.S. foreign direct investment in the Kyrgyz Republic in 2007 was \$13 million, or about 3% of the total foreign direct investment in the country. For the first nine months of 2008, U.S. foreign direct investment totaled only \$3.5 million, which is less than 1% of total foreign direct investment in the Kyrgyz Republic in

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<sup>82</sup> Al Bawaba. "Bishkek may become Microsoft Corporation office in Central Asia." The Free Library.

<http://www.thefreelibrary.com/Bishkek+may+become+Microsoft+Corporation+office+in+Central+Asia.-a0200079528> (accessed August 30, 2013).

<sup>83</sup> U.S. Department of State. "U.S. Kyrgyz Trade." United States State Department. [photos.state.gov/libraries/kyrgyzrepulic/325898/turganbaevaa0/Statistics\\_Econ\\_%20ENG%202010.pdf](http://photos.state.gov/libraries/kyrgyzrepulic/325898/turganbaevaa0/Statistics_Econ_%20ENG%202010.pdf) (accessed August 30, 2013).

2008.”<sup>84</sup> Though the US “improves the country’s financial situation”, which is one of the criteria in Table 1, the quantifiable amount is substantially less than the amount that Russia gives.

In comparison, Russia receives 19.39% of all Kyrgyz exports, and Kyrgyzstan receives 21.73% of its imports from Russia. Dwarfing Russia, China is the source of 50.03% of all Kyrgyz imports. Topping the export partners, Switzerland imports 23.1% of all Kyrgyz exports – gold makes up 39.80% of all Kyrgyz exports.<sup>85</sup> Notwithstanding these very strong Russo-Kyrgyz trade numbers, Moscow has sought to further increase the amount of economic collaboration between the two countries by allowing Kyrgyzstan to join the Moscow-backed Eurasian Economic Union.

### *Eurasian Economic Union*

Kyrgyzstan is the only World Trade Organization (WTO) member in Central Asia, and it has enjoyed years of favorable import and export tariffs that have contributed significantly to its economy. Given the sizeable Kyrgyz imports from China and exports to Switzerland, it is of note that Kyrgyzstan has perplexingly elected to join the Russia-Belarus-Kazakh Eurasian Customs

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<sup>84</sup> United States Embassy Bishkek. “Doing Business in the Kyrgyz Republic: 2009 Country Commercial Guide for U.S. Companies.” U.S. Department of State.

[http://bishkek.usembassy.gov/uploads/images/hvhbIftDMcIvZcmTXKEHbg/Country\\_Commercial\\_Guide\\_2009.pdf](http://bishkek.usembassy.gov/uploads/images/hvhbIftDMcIvZcmTXKEHbg/Country_Commercial_Guide_2009.pdf) (accessed August 30, 2013)

<sup>85</sup> "Kyrgyzstan Exports, Imports and Trade Partners." The Observatory of Economic Complexity. <http://atlas.media.mit.edu/country/kgz/> (accessed August 30, 2013).

Union. By joining the proposed Eurasian Customs Union, Kyrgyzstan will see a dramatic rise in its import and export tariffs to some of its largest trading partners;<sup>86</sup> while seeing a decrease in duties to the three Customs Union member states (Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan), which make up only about 30% of all Kyrgyz exports. Likewise, only about 26% of Kyrgyz imports come from the Eurasian Custom Union's members.<sup>87</sup>

Many observers viewed this decision with dismay. The United States sought to slow the advancement of the Eurasian Customs Union according to Secretary of State Hillary Clinton who also implied that the Eurasian Customs Union was a neo-Soviet Union organization.<sup>88</sup> More grave than being a throwback to Soviet economics are the predictions by Kyrgyzstan's own leaders.

Kyrgyz Finance Minister Melis Mambetzhonov stated that as many as 300,000 Kyrgyz could lose their jobs due to membership in the new Union. Prime Minister Omurbek Babanov helped in clarify that Kyrgyzstan had to seek membership because "a social explosion is

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<sup>86</sup> Marat, Erica. "Kyrgyzstan Joins Russian-backed Customs Union." Information Agency Kabar. <http://kabar.kg/eng/analytics/full/810> (accessed August 30, 2013).

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> RFE/RL. "Kyrgyzstan To Join Russian-Led Customs Union, Ukraine To Observe." Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty. <http://www.rferl.org/content/kyrgyzstan-ukraine-russia-customs-union/25001114.html> (accessed August 30, 2013).

possible, if we don't join the Customs Union, when tariffs are introduced on fuel products."<sup>89</sup>  
Considering that 60% of imports from Russia are fuel at a preferential price, this is not an unrealistic concern.<sup>90</sup>

Many analysts have noted that the 2010 Kyrgyz coup that led to the ouster of President Kurmanbek Bakiev was related to the increase of utility costs during the winter.<sup>91</sup> Historically, Russia has not hesitated to use gas and energy as weapons during negotiations. During the winter of 2006, for example, Russia turned off the gas to Ukraine.<sup>92</sup> Belarus faced the same fate during

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<sup>89</sup> Reuters. "Prime minister: Kyrgyzstan needs to join ex-Soviet customs union." Kyiv Post. <http://www.kyivpost.com/content/russia-and-former-soviet-union/prime-minister-kyrgyzstan-needs-to-join-ex-soviet--117467.html> (accessed August 30, 2013).

<sup>90</sup> Dzyubenko, Olga. "Kyrgyzstan needs to join ex-Soviet customs union - PM." Reuters. <http://in.mobile.reuters.com/article/worldNews/idINIndia-60693220111123> (accessed August 30, 2013).

<sup>91</sup> Daly, John. "The Impact of Energy Issues on the Kyrgyz Upheaval." The Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst | Central Asia-Caucasus Institute Analyst. <http://old.cacianalyst.org/?q=node/5351> (accessed August 30, 2013).

<sup>92</sup> BBC. "Russia shuts off gas to Ukraine." BBC News. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/7806870.stm> (accessed August 30, 2013).

a 2010 dispute with the Russian Federation.<sup>93</sup> Even Europe takes note, since 25% of all European gas originates in Russia.<sup>94</sup>

Looking forward, what will come of the Eurasian Customs of the Union is unclear. Russia finally (after having first applied in 1993) achieved full membership in the World Trade Organization during the summer of 2012.<sup>95</sup> Now that Russia is in the WTO it may not wish to do anything that might upset the Organization. It could be that the Customs Union was just a test of allegiance for the former Soviet Republics and that Moscow hoped that the threat of its impending self-created World Trade Organization-like union would put pressure on the WTO to speed-up the approval process. Either way, for now Kyrgyzstan does not face any immediate threat due to its membership in both the Customs Union and the World Trade Organization.

### *Economic conclusions*

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<sup>93</sup> Telegraph. "Russia cuts off gas supply to Belarus over unpaid bill." Telegraph.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/finance/newsbysector/energy/oilandgas/7842834/Russia-cuts-off-gas-supply-to-Belarus-over-unpaid-bill.html> (accessed August 30, 2013).

<sup>94</sup> Crumley, Bruce. "Russia's Gazprom Diplomacy: Turning Off Europe's Heat." Time Magazine.

<http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1870111,00.html> (accessed August 30, 2013).

<sup>95</sup> "Ministerial Conference approves Russia's WTO membership." World Trade Organization.

[http://www.wto.org/english/news\\_e/news11\\_e/acc\\_rus\\_16dec11\\_e.htm](http://www.wto.org/english/news_e/news11_e/acc_rus_16dec11_e.htm) (accessed August 30, 2013).

Given the sheer quantity of trade and investment from Russia, it is clear that Bishkek must be wise in how it deals with Moscow. The very large amounts of direct Russian investment to decrease Kyrgyz debt, to physically build infrastructure, to create sustainable industries and to allow Kyrgyz workers to work in Russia are huge boons to the Kyrgyz economy. The amount of money that Russia has promised Kyrgyzstan alone equates to more than 100% of GDP. Should Russia give Kyrgyzstan the cold shoulder and cut off support, the Kyrgyz economy would not be able to survive.<sup>96</sup>

The U.S. has no such economic ties or leverage with the Kyrgyz. American businesses have been unwilling to put down roots in Kyrgyzstan, and the U.S. government has never been interested in directly investing in Kyrgyzstan. While the Russians are much clearer on what will be achieved the United States has favored funneling money to agencies, like USAID, which provides advice.

The one area where Russia's influence was perceived as working against Kyrgyz economic interest was the Customs Union. Analysts have routinely given the Customs Union poor marks since they did not believe it would not assist the growth of the Kyrgyz economy. Moreover, many feared the Union would signal Kyrgyzstan's exit from the World Trade Organization, as it would not set its tariff policies based upon WTO standards but rather the Custom Union's.<sup>97</sup> Now that Russia is also a member of the WTO, it seems that the feared rapid increase in tariffs will not take effect.

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> "Free Market Institute of Central Asia." Customs Union Debate. [freemarket.kg/en/news/pros-and-cons-kyrgyzstan-s-entering-customs-union](http://freemarket.kg/en/news/pros-and-cons-kyrgyzstan-s-entering-customs-union) (accessed May 15, 2013).

In striving to create a more prosperous country Kyrgyz leaders must look at all the options available to them. The United States has had very little meaningful economic impact on Kyrgyzstan. Neither the U.S. government nor American businesses contribute large scale infusions of liquidity to the national economy. American assistance and business is minimal compared to the assistance given by Russia. Due to the strong nature of Russo-Kyrgyz economic collaboration and cooperation, it would seem that remaining close to Russia, even at great cost (i.e. joining the Customs Union or expelling the American base) makes good sense for Kyrgyzstan and well serves the Kyrgyz national interest.

## Political strength

### *An introduction to Kyrgyz politics*

The political side of national interest is one in which Russia also plays a key role in assisting Kyrgyzstan. As to whether this is in Kyrgyzstan's national interest, as per this thesis's Table 1, one sees that Kyrgyzstan has been offered admittance to Russian-formed organizations unlike anything that the United States has ever proposed to the Kyrgyz. The Kyrgyz, with fewer than two dozen embassies globally,<sup>98</sup> have very few champions abroad. The Kyrgyz Republic is a member of several major international organizations, including the United Nations (UN), the World Trade Organization (WTO), World Health Organization (WHO) and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).<sup>99</sup> Although Kyrgyzstan maintains membership it

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<sup>98</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs. "Diplomatičeskij predstavitel'stvo KR za rubezhom." 2013. (accessed October 28, 2013) [http://www.mfa.kg/diplomatic-missions-of-kr/dipmissions-of-kr-abroad-2\\_en.html](http://www.mfa.kg/diplomatic-missions-of-kr/dipmissions-of-kr-abroad-2_en.html)

<sup>99</sup> According to the CIA World Factbook (<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/kg.html>), Kyrgyzstan is also a member of: ADB, CICA, CIS, CSTO, EAEC, EAPC, EBRD, ECO, EITI (compliant country), FAO, GCTU, IAEA, IBRD, ICAO, ICC (NGOs), ICRM, IDA, IDB, IFAD, IFC, IFRC, ILO, IMF, Interpol, IOC, IOM, IPU, ISO (correspondent), ITSO, ITU, MIGA, NAM (observer), OIC, OPCW, OSCE, PCA, PFP, SCO, UN, UNCTAD, UNESCO, UNIDO, UNISFA, UNMIL, UNMISS, UNWTO, UPU, WCO, WFTU (NGOs), WHO, WIPO, WMO, WTO.

has never taken major leadership roles in any international organization. The nation-state frequently is on the recipient side of donor aid, so its inability to garner strong support for its elevation in organizations that engage in donor activity is understandable.

On the domestic front, Kyrgyzstan has long suffered from weak and unstable internal politics, and it frequently has had inept leaders who resist relinquishing their power. Unlike the other Central Asian nations, Kyrgyzstan has resolved its leadership problems in two coups/revolutions since 2005 that have seen the ouster of widely unpopular, nepotistic leaders who stole from the public purse and distributed privilege and wealth among their clan and family members.

Accusations of foreign backing for the overthrows were widespread in both of Kyrgyzstan's coups. Although it is very hard to pinpoint the degree to which foreign powers have interfered in the internal politics of Kyrgyzstan, it would seem that would-be coup leaders see support from Russia as invaluable. During the coup of 2010, evidence for this support can be seen in statements from some of the opposition-cum-victors, including Timur Sariyev, who explicitly stated that Russia had endorsed their activities.<sup>100</sup> Given this perceived or actual king-making ability, Russia's support remains a fought-over commodity by Kyrgyz leaders.

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<sup>100</sup> Feifer, Gregory. "Russian Moves In Kyrgyzstan Raise Questions Over U.S. Base." Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty.

[http://www.rferl.org/content/Russian\\_Moves\\_In\\_Kyrgyzstan\\_Raise\\_Questions\\_Over\\_US\\_Base/2007784.html](http://www.rferl.org/content/Russian_Moves_In_Kyrgyzstan_Raise_Questions_Over_US_Base/2007784.html) (accessed August 31, 2013).

## *Global politics*

Kyrgyzstan's general anonymity and lack of resources have kept it off of the world stage. Central Asia watchers frequently lament that the Western press features Kyrgyzstan only for unfortunate events and mishaps (e.g. genocide, civil war, bride kidnapping, corruption, torture, plane crashes) In seeking to change Kyrgyzstan's perceived status in the world, the Kyrgyz Delegation to the United Nations in New York sought one of the five rotating seats (specifically the "Asia seat") on the UN Security Council in 2011.

Although many dismissed Kyrgyzstan, a country with fewer than two dozen diplomatic missions internationally, from the start "...it has two cards to play in seeking a place in the UN's most powerful group: a woman leader and air bases." Despite the fact that the world was in the midst of a global economic crisis (which did not affect Kyrgyzstan, given that it has neither credit rating nor international bonds),<sup>101</sup> Kyrgyzstan decided to "go all-in" for its bid for the seat.

The Kyrgyz hope was that the only other candidate for the position that year, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, which had recently seen Osama bin Laden killed within its borders and was a thorn-in-the-side of the U.S. over drone strikes within its sovereign territory, would not get the Americans' backing. The Kyrgyz reasoned that their credentials as the only democracy with the only woman president in Central Asia would make it more attractive to an international audience. Moreover, at least visibly Kyrgyzstan had cooperated with the U.S. in fighting terror:

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<sup>101</sup>Bloomberg News Service. "Kyrgyzstan Bets on Air Base, Woman Reformer to Win UN Election." News. <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2011-10-13/kyrgyzstan-bets-on-air-base-woman-reformer-to-win-un-election.html> (accessed August 30, 2013).

Kyrgyzstan had hosted an American military facility for years, which was of great assistance during the war in Afghanistan.

Pakistan evidently was quite surprised that the Kyrgyz would attempt to stand in the way of its would-be seventh time on the UN Security Council. To ward off the Kyrgyz effort, Pakistan dispatched first the Prime Minister, then the Foreign Minister to attempt to dissuade Kyrgyzstan from its attempt. Surprisingly, Kyrgyzstan declined the “assistance” Pakistan offered during the meetings in Bishkek.

Pakistan met this rebuke with incredulity. News reports quoted former Pakistani Ambassador to the United Nations Munir Akram as saying that Kyrgyzstan’s refusal to step-aside for Pakistan, a country with a population 33 times larger than Kyrgyzstan’s, indicated that there was “mischief.” Akram continued: “at the U.N., most astute observers are convinced that the Kyrgyz bid had been encouraged, if not inspired, by the U.S.”<sup>102</sup> Indeed the United States had been unwilling to back Pakistan in the run-up to the elections for the seat.

Pakistan’s *Dawn* newspaper predicted that “Kyrgyzstan cannot defeat Pakistan since it cannot secure a two-thirds majority of 128 votes in the General Assembly.”<sup>103</sup> In the end,

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<sup>102</sup> Goodenough, Patrick. "Pakistan-U.S. Rift May Be Reflected in U.N. Security Council Election." CNS News. <http://cnsnews.com/news/article/pakistan-us-rift-may-be-reflected-un-security-council-election> (accessed August 31, 2013).

<sup>103</sup> Kucera, Joshua. "Will Manas Get Kyrgyzstan Into The UN Security Council?" EurasiaNet.org. <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/64316> (accessed August 31, 2013).

Kyrgyzstan's dreams were dashed when Pakistan won 129 votes to Kyrgyzstan's 55.<sup>104</sup> In retrospect, it is still unclear precisely what happened and what the U.S. role, if any, was in encouraging or enticing Kyrgyzstan to run for a seat that realistically it had only a very small chance of winning.

As many diplomatic negotiations are held behind closed doors, it is impossible to say with certainty what part the United States played. One could argue that the degree of American collaboration to support the Kyrgyz bid for the Security Council seat varied from having no role; to the U.S. using Kyrgyzstan against Pakistan, in which case Kyrgyz interest was a side effect; to the other extreme, the U.S. supported Kyrgyzstan as an ally, with the secondary benefit of frustrating Pakistan. In any case, Kyrgyzstan's then-President Roza Otunbaeva made her best effort to secure the seat, including traveling to Europe to solicit France's backing.<sup>105</sup>

Kyrgyzstan's challenging Pakistan for the seat, perhaps with the implicit support of the United States, was a high point in its history at the United Nations. As General David Petraeus wrote,

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<sup>104</sup>Imtiaz, Huma. "Pakistan wins temporary UN council seat." Tribune of Pakistan.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/279024/pakistan-just-manages-to-win-non-permanent-member-seat-on-un-security-council/> (accessed August 30, 2013).

<sup>105</sup> Central Asia Newswire. "Otunbaeva seeks French Support for U.N. Security Council Bid."

Universal News. March 3, 2011. (accessed October 28, 2013)

<http://www.universalnewswires.com/centralasia/viewstory.aspx?id=3443>

“What policymakers believe to have taken place in any particular case is what matters—more than what actually occurred.”<sup>106</sup>

The Russian Federation’s involvement with Kyrgyzstan internationally has been quite limited. Most notable was the invitation to join the Moscow-centered Customs Union. This offer meant that Kyrgyzstan was to be taken more seriously by other regional powers; they would see that poor, underdeveloped Kyrgyzstan was important enough to garner attention and support from Russia. This vote of confidence alone demonstrated a degree of friendship that other countries rarely show to Kyrgyzstan.

### *American friendship*

It is a widely held perception in Kyrgyzstan that the United States’ interest in the country is purely related to the base. The U.S. assigns first-time, career diplomats, who do not seem to have strong personal relationships with the Kyrgyz leadership, to be U.S. ambassadors to Bishkek. The exception to this rule is U.S. Ambassador Stephen Young, who was renowned during his tenure for his particularly strong, personal relationship with President Askar Akaev,

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<sup>106</sup> Engelhardt, Tom. “An Obit for General Petraeus.” *The Nation*.

<http://www.thenation.com/article/171368/obit-general#axzz2cbn1Gy8v> (accessed August 30, 2013)

who was deposed in a popular uprising in 2005.<sup>107</sup> Since the 2005 coup, the United States has not been able to maintain close ties with the Kyrgyz leadership.

Unlike the private invitations extended to Kyrgyzstan's President by the Russian government, the United States has been unable to impress Kyrgyz leadership with such close personal relationships. Prior to the coup, the United States recognized its shortcomings. In a U.S. State Department cable titled "Keeping-up contacts with Kyrgyzstan", dated February 2, 2010, U.S. Ambassador Tatiana Gfoeller recommended that:

Where high level contacts are made with Uzbekistan or Kazakhstan, parallel contacts with Kyrgyzstan would make sense. A Cabinet level visit to the Transit Center would pay huge dividends. A high level meeting for the Kyrgyz Annual Bilateral Consultations delegation, to be headed by Maxim Bakiyev [President Bakiev's son] and FM Sarbayev, would also make a real difference.<sup>108</sup>

Recognizing that the United States needed to get closer to the Bakiev government despite widespread accusations of human rights abuses, the State Department decided to appease

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<sup>107</sup> Feigenbaum, Amy. "Kyrgyzstan ambassador calls for peaceful transfer." The Wesleyan Argus. <http://wesleyanargus.com/2005/04/29/kyrgyzstan-ambassador-calls-for-peaceful-transfer/> (accessed August 31, 2013).

<sup>108</sup> Gfoeller, Tatiana. "Kyrgyzstan seeks signs from the U.S. of long-term commitment to the relationship." U.S. State Department. [cablegatesearch.net/cable.php?id=10BISHKEK84](http://cablegatesearch.net/cable.php?id=10BISHKEK84) (accessed August 30, 2013).

President Bakiev by avoiding his democracy-supporting opponents and heeding Ambassador Gfoeller's advice. One means of reaching out to the Bakiev government was by working through the generally loathed President's son, Maxim Bakiev. Indeed, Bakiev was on a flight to Washington, D.C. for a State Department program as the April 7, 2010 coup unfolded that toppled his father.<sup>109</sup> On the evening of April 7, Bishkek residents ransacked and then torched Maxim Bakiev's Bishkek house.

The coup brought President Roza Otunbaeva to power. She touted her presence as the first woman and the first English-speaking president of a Central Asian country. She officially visited New York City for the opening of the United Nations session in the autumn of 2010. On September 24, 2010, President Otunbaeva met for several minutes to meet with U.S. President Barack Obama. According to the White House press release about the meeting: "The two presidents also discussed our common security and development objectives in Afghanistan, and President Obama thanked President Otunbayeva for Kyrgyzstan's contributions towards meeting these shared objectives."<sup>110</sup>

The second time that Otunbaeva met with Obama was on March 7, 2011; this meeting was unexpected as she only was scheduled to meet with National Security Assistant Tom

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<sup>109</sup> Tynan, Deirdre. "Maxim Bakiyev Taken into Custody in Britain?" EurasiaNet.org.

<http://www.eurasianet.org/node/61297> (accessed August 31, 2013).

<sup>110</sup> "Read-out of President Obama's Meeting with Kyrgyzstani President Roza Otunbayeva." The White House. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2010/09/24/read-out-president-obamas-meeting-with-kyrgyzstani-president-roza-otunba> (accessed August 31, 2013).

Donilon, but President Obama stopped by for a surprise visit.<sup>111</sup> This allowed President Otunbaeva the opportunity to have a photograph taken of herself and the U.S. President shaking hands – a lasting memento that she could take back and have published in Kyrgyzstan. This also was the last time (as of November 2013) that a Kyrgyz president visited the United States.

### *Russian friendship*

Unlike U.S. President Obama, who allowed two photo-ops and pledged more support via development work, Russian support of the Kyrgyz leadership has taken a personal and political tone. Since the U.S. State Department decided right before the coup to strengthen ties with the unpopular Kyrgyz dictator Bakiev and to avoid the opposition, one sees in hindsight that Russia perhaps made the wiser decision by developing closer contacts with the opposition before the Dictator's overthrow.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has maintained very close personal relations with the Kyrgyz leadership, including sending birthday congratulations and attending personal parties<sup>112</sup> The day after the April 2010 coup, Vladimir Putin called Kyrgyz President Roza Otunbaeva and

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<sup>111</sup> U.S. Department of State. "President Barack Obama shakes hands with President Roza Otunbayeva of Kyrgyzstan." State Department.

<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/pix/sca/kyrgyzstan/157857.htm> (accessed August 30, 2013)

<sup>112</sup> Kyrgyz National News Agency. "Vladimir Putin congratulated Almazbek Atambaev on his birthday." Information Agency Kabar. <http://kabar.kg/eng/politics/full/5060> (accessed August 31, 2013).

“promised her financial aid, legitimacy and a ‘special relationship’ with the Kremlin, and she gladly accepted.”<sup>113</sup> Putin then personally recognized, on behalf of Russia, the successful coup leaders as official government of Kyrgyzstan. The United States recognized the new government a short while later.

The precise role that Russia played in the toppling of Bakiev is unknown, but the leading opposition figure, now Member of Parliament and faction leader Omurbek Tekebaev, stated that “Russia had ‘played a role,’” adding, “you’ve seen the level of Russia's joy when they saw Bakiyev was gone. So now there is a high probability that the duration of the U.S. air base's presence in Kyrgyzstan will be shortened.”<sup>114</sup>

The day before the coup, leading opposition figure Temir Sariyev returned to Bishkek from a trip to Moscow and informed the other opposition leaders that he had personally met with President Putin and that Putin backed their efforts.<sup>115</sup> Putin coyly denied this, saying that “Neither Russia nor your humble servant [Putin] nor Russian officials have anything to do with

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<sup>113</sup> Shuster, Simon. "Russia to Help Kyrgyzstan's Opposition After Revolution." Time Magazine. <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1979060,00.html#ixzz2curN4891> (accessed August 31, 2013).

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> Feifer, Gregory. "Russian Moves In Kyrgyzstan Raise Questions Over U.S. Base." Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty. [http://www.rferl.org/content/Russian\\_Moves\\_In\\_Kyrgyzstan\\_Raise\\_Questions\\_Over\\_US\\_Base/2007784.html](http://www.rferl.org/content/Russian_Moves_In_Kyrgyzstan_Raise_Questions_Over_US_Base/2007784.html) (accessed August 31, 2013).

these events..."<sup>116</sup> The Russian President continued: "As for me personally, the events have taken me by surprise."<sup>117</sup>

Whatever Russia's clandestine role in the coup, within a day opposition leader and now President Almazbek Atambaev flew to Moscow for meetings to discuss next steps and was promised \$ 50 million by Russian authorities.<sup>118</sup> Radio Free Europe reported that Kazakh Foreign Minister Kanat Saudabaev said: "Bakiev's departure was the result of 'joint efforts' involving Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbaev, U.S. President Barack Obama, and Russian President Dmitry Medvedev." The statement continued that "the development is an important step towards the stabilization of the situation, a return to a framework providing for the rule of law, and the prevention of a civil war in Kyrgyzstan."<sup>119</sup> In any event, even during the internal affair of a revolution, Kyrgyzstan must look outside of its borders to help maintain stability.

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<sup>116</sup> RIA Novosti. "Russia not involved in Kyrgyz events." RIA Novosti.

<http://en.rian.ru/russia/20100407/158472404.html> (accessed August 31, 2013).

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. "Kyrgyz President Bakiev 'Resigns'." Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty.

[http://www.rferl.org/content/Gunfire\\_Erupts\\_Amid\\_Rival\\_Political\\_Rallies/2012762.html](http://www.rferl.org/content/Gunfire_Erupts_Amid_Rival_Political_Rallies/2012762.html) (accessed August 31, 2013).

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

### *Discussion of Kyrgyz national interest in the political sphere*

The national interest, politically, of the Kyrgyz is to see internal stability and to be promoted externally in international organizations. Although the United States did not oppose Kyrgyzstan's bid for a rotating seat on the United Nations Security Council, it also did not campaign for it. The U.S. seems to have found a convenient opportunity to stroke the ego of Kyrgyzstan while challenging the Pakistanis. Internationally, the U.S. has done very little to support Kyrgyz interests.

In internal politics, Russia's greatest outreach was to invite Kyrgyzstan to join its newly formed Eurasian Customs Union. Even though the Custom Union's merits for the Kyrgyz economy were questionable, it is intriguing that underdeveloped Kyrgyzstan would be considered. If nothing else, this gesture showed internationally that Russia values its ties with the Kyrgyz. This could be, as in the case of the U.S. "helping" Kyrgyzstan with its bid to get on the Security Council, merely using Kyrgyzstan as a means to further Russian ends.

Russia's perceived backing of the Kyrgyz leadership has led to several positive outcomes for the Kyrgyz. For one, Russia's endorsement of a leader adds legitimacy when the new president might not have been otherwise taken seriously by threatening neighbors such as Uzbekistan or groups (i.e. the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan) that might wish to take advantage of the confusion.

Following the 2010 coup, had Russia maintained that Bakiev was the legitimate authority, it could have by means of finance, propaganda or military sought to return him to power. This in turn could have turned into a bloody saga, resulting in civil war. Russia's prompt

action lending legitimacy to the new government allowed the new authorities to get to work right away.

Most important to Kyrgyz national interest is that Kyrgyzstan has had tendency towards violent protests and instability. In such an environment it is virtually impossible to guarantee the economic growth of the country. Few wish to invest, travel to or collaborate with a country that teeters on the verge of being a “collapsed state.” Russia’s backing and support of the new leadership allowed for continuity and an assurance of some level of stability.

## Defense Capabilities

### *An introduction to Kyrgyz defense and security*

Like in the political and economic fields, the Kyrgyz Republic's national defense is strongly linked with Russia. As per Table 1, Kyrgyzstan's defense capabilities are "improved" via defense treaties, active Russian bases within its territory, Russian training and billions of dollars of Russian direct investment in the Kyrgyz military. Russia has taken an explicitly active role in helping the Kyrgyz create a secure nation.

Though in order to more fully explore whether the Kyrgyz Republic operates in its national interest in relation to its defense and security, one must begin by examining the historical record of what have been (and remain) the primary threats to Kyrgyzstan. Over the past two decades, Kyrgyzstan has faced two existential threats: first, external security in relation to state actors (namely Uzbekistan) and non-state actors (namely Taliban elements and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan),<sup>120</sup> and second, mass destabilizing violence, expressed mostly between ethnic Kyrgyz and ethnic Uzbeks. In these cases, military hardware and know-how are musts. Kyrgyzstan has been unable to and inept at resolving the situations itself and has had to reach out to foreign partners to avoid catastrophe.

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<sup>120</sup> Orange, Richard. "Kyrgyz crack down on Islamists." Telegraph.co.uk - Telegraph online,

Daily Telegraph, Sunday Telegraph - Telegraph.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/kyrgyzstan/8246594/Kyrgyz-crack-down-on-Islamists.html> (accessed August 31, 2013).

Kyrgyz leaders consider the American interest and participation in the region to be a short term anomaly, associated with the U.S. war in Afghanistan. The Kyrgyz expect that once the war ends the Americans will again forget Central Asia.<sup>121</sup> In contrast, the large Monument to Kyrgyz-Russian Friendship still stands outside of the Soviet-built Jigorku Kenesh (Parliament Building) celebrating the hundreds of years of Russo-Kyrgyz camaraderie. In supporting Kyrgyz national interest in terms of security and the military as one means to that security, Russia has a respectable track record. The Americans do not have such a record, but have made attempts to demonstrate their interest in supporting a secure Kyrgyz state. Kyrgyzstan must look towards its long term options in scrutinizing who will likely support its security.

### *Military hardware*

The military of the Kyrgyz Republic is a relic of the Soviet era with a standing army of a mere 2,400 men. The Air Force is entirely Soviet manufactured, and it is quickly aging into dilapidation. In 1995, the Kyrgyz Air Force possessed 100 MIG fighter jets; by 2005 there was technically a fleet of 29 MIGs, 24 of which were in “storage” and “others” that had been “removed from service.” As of 2013, there are four training jet airplanes (down from 96 in 1995)

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<sup>121</sup> Gfoeller, Tatiana. "Kyrgyzstan seeks signs from the U.S. of long-term commitment to the relationship." U.S. State Department. [cablegatesearch.net/cable.php?id=10BISHKEK84](http://cablegatesearch.net/cable.php?id=10BISHKEK84) (accessed August 30, 2013).

and a fleet of eight transport helicopters and two attack helicopters.<sup>122</sup> The President of the Kyrgyz Republic's airplane is a 1983 Soviet transport plane that was last factory-repaired in 1996.<sup>123</sup> Clearly, assistance from the outside is well appreciated.

The Russian Federation has not sought to wean Kyrgyzstan from its dependence on Russian military hardware and training. In addition to the Kyrgyz-Russian lease for the Russian bases (which brings Kyrgyzstan a rent of \$4.5 million and training for its military pilots<sup>124</sup>), during the summer of 2013 Russia promised the country \$1.1 billion in armaments. These armaments are worth 25% of the Kyrgyz GDP, a strong sign of how keen Russian interest is in Kyrgyzstan. The timing of the gift is noteworthy, coming within days of the Kyrgyz Parliament voting to expel the U.S. base at Manas.

The Chinese newspaper, the *Global Times*, reported that "Since the cancellation of the lease for the U.S. Manas Transit Center (MTC) in Kyrgyzstan, things are moving rapidly between Bishkek and Moscow in terms of bilateral cooperation. From writing off Kyrgyz debt to entering

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<sup>122</sup> "Kyrgyzstan Air Force - Equipment." GlobalSecurity.org.

<http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/centralasia/kyrgyz-af-equipment.htm> (accessed August 31, 2013).

<sup>123</sup> NewEurasia. "Is Bakiev Safe Aboard?" News Eurasia. <https://www.neweurasia.net/politics-and-society/is-bakiev-safe-aboard/> (accessed August 31, 2013).

<sup>124</sup> RIA Novosti. "Kyrgyz Air Base May Soon Host Russian Strategic Bombers." RIA Novosti. [http://en.rian.ru/military\\_news/20120922/176152844.html](http://en.rian.ru/military_news/20120922/176152844.html) (accessed August 31, 2013).

arms deals, Russia has been blazing on all cylinders to strengthen its ties with the ex-Soviet state.”<sup>125</sup>

Farooq Yousaf of the Centre for Research and Security Studies of Islamabad noted:

“This influence may well be linked with the future of [Collective Security Treaty Organization] CSTO and joint security forces as well, as Russia may well look to utilize its Kant air base in Kyrgyzstan for that purpose in future. Thus, Bishkek is currently Moscow's top priority in Central Asia. Considering its size and geographic location, Kyrgyzstan may have realized that it has to align itself with one of the global power blocs. Meanwhile, given the signals coming out of Bishkek, it seems obvious that it wants to align itself to the regional power - Russia.”<sup>126</sup>

The American agreement with Kyrgyzstan over the use of the Manas Transit Center is quite complicated and spans three regimes and the terms of four Kyrgyz presidents. Initially, under Kyrgyz President Askar Akaev, the U.S. paid only \$ 2 million, plus take-off and landing-fees. Additionally, millions of dollars in fuel contracts were awarded to corporations in the region.

After the 2005 “Tulip” Revolution, a U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) report found that deposed Kyrgyz President Akaev and his family had embezzled a great deal of this

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<sup>125</sup> Yousaf, Farooq. "Moscow influence in Central Asia boosted by Kyrgyz military deal." Global Times. <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/799646.shtml> (accessed August 31, 2013).

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

money. New President Kurmanbek Bakiev renegotiated the base agreement with the United States to a rent plus assistance agreement totaling \$ 150 million.

By 2009, discontent with the American facility had grown and the Kyrgyz Parliament voted 78-1 to close the base, which by this time was renamed the “Manas Transit Center.”<sup>127</sup> In response, Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Admiral Michael Mullen stated that, “It's not for me to get involved in Kyrgyzstan politics... The country can decide, and we'll figure out how to go from there.” He continued, “We've enjoyed a very important, close relationship and have benefited with a critical capability. But it's not a capability that can't be replaced. And if we have to do that, we will.”<sup>128</sup>

U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates both expressed cautious hope for a potential renegotiation and expressed dismay at the Russians for their apparent opposition to the U.S. base, saying “we are prepared to look at the fees and see if there is justification for a somewhat larger payment... But we're not going to be ridiculous about it.” Gates continued: “Like I said,

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<sup>127</sup> Manas is the name of the major international airport in Bishkek to which the U.S. military facility is attached. Manas is a mythical hero of the Kyrgyz who united the forty historical nomadic tribes.

<sup>128</sup> Gearan, Anne. "Gates: U.S. would pay more rent at Manas." Air Force Times.

[www.airforcetimes.com/article/20090219/NEWS/902190314/Gates-U-S-would-pay-more-rent-Manas](http://www.airforcetimes.com/article/20090219/NEWS/902190314/Gates-U-S-would-pay-more-rent-Manas) (accessed August 30, 2013).

it's an important base, but not so important that we will waste taxpayer dollars.”<sup>129</sup> In Gates' view, “the Russians are trying to have it both ways with respect to Afghanistan in terms of Manas: On one hand you're making positive noises about working with us in Afghanistan and on the other hand you're working against us in terms of that airfield which is clearly important to us... I haven't written this off yet. My hope is we can walk this back with the Kyrgyz and continue the arrangement.”<sup>130</sup> By this point, the influence of Russia was becoming increasingly pronounced.

### *Regional instability*

The Kyrgyz understand that for their own security and national interest, they must maintain stability. Similarly, as the Institute of War and Peace Reporting wrote, Russia clearly understands the risk of instability in the region and the inability of the governments of Central Asian nations to keep the region stable.<sup>131</sup> Kyrgyzstan understands its weaknesses, and it understands that Russia has effectively taken charge of the security situation in other Central

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<sup>129</sup> Garamone, Jim. "Gates Encouraged by NATO Discussions on Afghanistan." United States Department of Defense. <http://www.defense.gov/News/NewsArticle.aspx?ID=53159> (accessed August 31, 2013).

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> Mukhametrakhimova, Saule. Moscow Ponders Central Asian Security, Stability. <http://iwpr.net/report-news/moscow-ponders-central-asian-security-stability> (accessed September 7, 2013)

Asian republics and rewarded their decisions to cooperate with Moscow. A case in point is neighboring Tajikistan's agreement to permit the Russian bases that house the 201st Division; Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu stated that "President Vladimir Putin's orders [to me] are straightforward: to assess all risks and to help the Tajik armed forces face these risks."<sup>132</sup>

This offer of military defense from Moscow appears to be more than hollow words. The Russian government-owned news service RIA Novosti ran a story titled, "Russia Keeps Tajik Base – Risking Taliban Face-off." The article reports that although Russia won its bases, "the price includes risk of placing Russian servicemen under fire if violence flares up in volatile Central Asia." The article continues that "Destabilization is imminent in Central Asia after U.S. troops' pullout from Afghanistan, analysts said," as "the Taliban is hoping to return to power in Afghanistan or at least increase their influence, which would likely resonate throughout the region," said Alexander Knyazev from the [Russian government owned] Institute of Oriental Studies at the Russian Academy of Sciences."<sup>133</sup>

The United States also has proposed military support but by less tangible and military means. The Manas Transit Center's website has more than three years of internally-produced "news stories" of how the American base has been a net positive for Kyrgyzstan. None of the stories mentions opposing terror, preventing invasion or defending the country. Of the roughly 150 stories on the website only six dealt with "joint military training exercises" (i.e., American

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<sup>132</sup> RIA Novosti. "Putin Orders Support of Tajik Military After U.S. Pullout From Afghanistan." RIA Novosti. <http://en.rian.ru/world/20130801/182533633.html> (accessed August 31, 2013).

<sup>133</sup> RIA Novosti. "Russia Keeps Tajik Base, Risking Taliban Face-Off." RIA Novosti. <http://en.rian.ru/world/20121005/176424262.html> (accessed August 31, 2013).

and Kyrgyz troops working together), four focused on emergency/disaster response, one the donation of a bomb suit and another on exchanging experience in treating Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). The rest of the base's efforts are completely nonmilitary: 15 deal with renovation or donations to schools and another 15 with various (mostly Kyrgyz) visitors to the base; 14 were about clothes or medicine donated by the U.S. to the Kyrgyz, and eight others dealt with American Corners.<sup>134</sup> Thirteen stories focused on live concerts by U.S. personnel or Kyrgyz nationals, 10 covered inter Kyrgyz-American soccer or basketball games and four dealt with assistance to orphans. None of these articles explicitly addressed strategic military planning or defense for Kyrgyzstan. Whether these trainings "improved the national defense capabilities", as in Table 1, is doubtful.

In assuring the Kyrgyz of the United States desire to support Kyrgyz national interest in terms of security, the U.S. record appears lackluster. Allowing the U.S. base to remain does not seem to equate to greater security for the Kyrgyz. Unlike Russia, which gives money, training and hardware, the United States only pays the rent. Moreover, Kyrgyz military interaction with the U.S. military is less than that which occurs between the Kyrgyz and the Russians and may lead to a perception among Kyrgyz military decision makers that the Russians are closer friends of the Kyrgyz military. Ironically, many of the stability problems Kyrgyzstan faces are the direct results of Moscow's decisions decades ago

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<sup>134</sup> American Corners are resource centers around Kyrgyzstan where Kyrgyz locals can get books in English and information about America.

*Internal security: Osh, the Achilles' heel of Kyrgyzstan*

Internal security is vital to a country's national interest. During the formation of the state boundaries of what is now the Kyrgyz Republic, Moscow-based Soviet authorities applied the strategy of "divide and conquer" and designed southern Kyrgyzstan to be unstable. The Soviet government intentionally drew the map so that a great deal of Uzbeks would not be in Uzbekistan, but in Kyrgyzstan. Moreover, southern Kyrgyzstan is dotted by seven "enclaves" and "exclaves" of territory: five of these parcels are Uzbekistan's, two are Tajikistan's and they are all legally and internationally recognized as landlocked islands of sovereign Uzbek and Tajik territory respectively, located within the otherwise sovereign territory of Kyrgyzstan. To further complicate matters, the Soviet Union never invested a great deal in clearly demarcating the borders between the Republics, as all Republics were members of the Soviet Union. Even today demarcation disputes lead to flare-ups and shootings by customs authorities at the border.<sup>135</sup>

The instability caused by these 80-year-old decisions frequently manifests itself as flashes of violence, and on two occasions it nearly led to civil war. The first occasion was during June 1990 when inter-ethnic fighting between ethnic Kyrgyz and ethnic Uzbeks broke out in the southern city of Osh, the second largest city in the Kyrgyz Soviet Republic. The rioting rapidly

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<sup>135</sup> RFE/RL. "Shooting In Kyrgyz-Uzbek Frontier Kills Border Guard, Injures Another." Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty. <http://www.rferl.org/content/kyrgyz-uzbek-shootout-border-guard-killed/25054254.html> (accessed August 31, 2013).

became uncontrollable and Moscow ordered Red Army troops in to impose martial law to restore stability.<sup>136</sup> After several days, the chaos was quelled.<sup>137</sup>

In 1992, shortly after the Osh Riots of 1990, Kyrgyzstan, perhaps recognizing its own inability to maintain the peace, joined the newly formed Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), along with the former Soviet Republics of Russia, Tajikistan, Armenia, Kazakhstan and Belarus. During a 2006 interview, CSTO Secretary General Nikolai Bordyuzha stated that the purpose of the Treaty was "...to prevent bloodshed and application of force for solving problems both inside the country and on the borders with other states..."<sup>138</sup>

During June 2010, ethnic Kyrgyz undertook a large-scale pogrom of ethnic Uzbeks in Southern Kyrgyzstan, leading to the dramatic destabilization of the country. Osh, the second-largest city in Kyrgyzstan (also known as "the southern capital"), was set ablaze by rampaging crowds of predominantly ethnic Kyrgyz slaughtering mostly Uzbek families, torching their structures (including homes, schools, hospitals and mosques) and looting whatever else remained. The Kyrgyz military was unable to quell the violence, and further reports suggested that Kyrgyz troops (who are near-universally ethnic Kyrgyz) were unwilling to fire on their

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<sup>136</sup> Human Rights Watch. "Where is the Justice?" <http://www.hrw.org/node/92408/section/5>.

Human Rights Watch. (accessed August 30, 2013)

<sup>137</sup> RFE/RL. "Ferghana Valley: A Tinderbox For Violence." Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty. [http://www.rferl.org/content/Why\\_Is\\_The\\_Ferghana\\_Valley\\_A\\_Tinderbox\\_For\\_Violence/2074849.html](http://www.rferl.org/content/Why_Is_The_Ferghana_Valley_A_Tinderbox_For_Violence/2074849.html) (accessed August 31, 2013).

<sup>138</sup> Global Security.org. "Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO).

<http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/int/csto.htm> (accessed August 30, 2013)

fellow ethnics. As the violence became graver, Kyrgyz President Roza Otunbaeva declared in a national television address: “Since yesterday the situation has got out of control. We need outside military forces to halt the situation. For this reason we have appealed to Russia for help.”<sup>139</sup>

Despite the Secretary General’s early promise that the Treaty Organization existed “to prevent bloodshed and application of force for solving problems both inside the country and on the borders with other states,” Natalya Timakhova, a spokesman for Russian President Dmitry Medvedev responded that Russia would not send troops yet, as Russia and the CSTO did not “see the conditions for its participating in resolving” the matter and that peacekeepers could only be sent in consultation with the United Nations. Shortly thereafter, Medvedev dispatched Russian soldiers to secure the Russian military facilities in Kyrgyzstan, but confirmed that, “Only in the case of a foreign intrusion and an attempt to externally seize power can we state that there is an attack against the CSTO. All the problems of Kyrgyzstan have internal roots.”<sup>140</sup>

During the mass instability that seemed to be spiraling towards genocide or civil war, the Kyrgyz government never directly requested United States assistance. The totality of the U.S.’s

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<sup>139</sup> Associated Press. "Kyrgyzstan appeals for Russian help as clashes kill 62." Taipei Times. <http://www.taipetimes.com/News/front/archives/2010/06/13/2003475369> (accessed August 31, 2013).

<sup>140</sup> UPI. "Russia provides fuel aid to Kyrgyzstan." Energy Resources. [http://www.upi.com/Business\\_News/Energy-Resources/2010/06/15/Russia-provides-fuel-aid-to-Kyrgyzstan/UPI-41771276636226/](http://www.upi.com/Business_News/Energy-Resources/2010/06/15/Russia-provides-fuel-aid-to-Kyrgyzstan/UPI-41771276636226/) (accessed August 31, 2013).

involvement and reaction during the actual course of violence was the release of a statement on the U.S. Embassy's website, titled "Ambassador's Day of Mourning Statement" that read

On this day of mourning, on behalf of the American people and my colleagues in the U.S. Embassy, I would like to express our deepest and most sincere condolences to the families of victims of the tragic events in southern Kyrgyzstan. We have followed the events in Osh and Jalal-Abad oblasts with dismay and concern.

I know that no words can take away the sorrow the families and all Kyrgyz people feel at this time. We hope that life will return to normal as soon as possible for all those affected by these tragic events.<sup>141</sup>

Such a statement does not give the same degree of assurance as did the Soviets' "boots on the ground" response in 1990. Despite this, in the subsequent months the United States financed numerous development and post-conflict projects in Southern Kyrgyzstan<sup>142</sup> and helped to finance the Kyrgyz Inquiry Commission's (KIC) "Report of The Independent International

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<sup>141</sup> Gfoeller, Tatiana. "Press Releases 2010." Embassy of the United States Bishkek, Kyrgyz Republic. US Embassy Bishkek. [http://bishkek.usembassy.gov/2010\\_0616\\_condolences.html](http://bishkek.usembassy.gov/2010_0616_condolences.html) (accessed August 31, 2013).

<sup>142</sup> "Stabilization – Office of Transition Initiatives | Central Asian Republics." USAID OTI. <http://centralasia.usaid.gov/kyrgyzstan/stabilization-OTI> (accessed August 31, 2013).

Commission of Inquiry into the Events in Southern Kyrgyzstan in June 2010," headed by Finnish Member of Parliament Kimmo Kiljunen. The Kyrgyz responded to the Report's findings by voting Kiljunen be *persona non grata*, and a Kyrgyz Member of Parliament accused him of having received bribes from Uzbeks to write the report to slander the ethnic Kyrgyz as genocidal.<sup>143</sup>

Initiated immediately after the coup and two months before the Osh events, the USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) launched work in Kyrgyzstan that focused on bringing stability to the country. The Office defined its existence in Kyrgyzstan this way:

In May 2010, USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) launched a program in the Kyrgyz Republic in response to the country's political crises. Popular demonstrations in April led to the ouster of former President Kurmanbek Bakiyev. Given this window of opportunity, the U.S. Government was able to further demonstrate its support of democracy in Central Asia by supporting efforts aimed at establishing transparent, accountable and effective governance at both national and local levels. The violence and mass displacements stemming from the June 2010 events in the southern part of the country highlighted the need

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<sup>143</sup> RFE/RL. "Head Of Commission On Kyrgyz Violence Declared Persona Non Grata." Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty.

[http://www.rferl.org/content/head\\_of\\_commission\\_on\\_kyrgyz\\_violence\\_declared\\_persona\\_non\\_grata/24205930.html](http://www.rferl.org/content/head_of_commission_on_kyrgyz_violence_declared_persona_non_grata/24205930.html) (accessed August 31, 2013).

for immediate and targeted assistance to address emerging sources of instability and conflict within communities that have the potential to derail the ongoing democratic transition. The constitutional referendum, followed by parliamentary, presidential, and local elections, represent critical milestones to establishing a more stable and secure democracy. During this critical period of transition, the USAID/OTI program in the Kyrgyz Republic is supporting the country's efforts by encouraging democratic processes and helping to build trust both within communities, and between citizens and government.<sup>144</sup>

This U.S. programming clearly sought to improve the situation during the tense and hostile period immediately following the Osh events, but it did not lay out any clear objectives as to how it would further enforce regional security. The Russians did not react with such theoretical concepts of how to best guarantee democratization in the country; rather, they simply acknowledged that the CSTO stood by and waited for threats from the outside to arise. That being said, in understanding what will likely support its overall security, Kyrgyzstan knows that Moscow has an ongoing interest in and concern about any outbreaks of violence in Central Asia.

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<sup>144</sup> USAID. "Kyrgyzstan." U.S. Agency for International Development.

<http://www.usaid.gov/kyrgyzstan/political-transitions> (accessed August 31, 2013).

## *Outside attack*

If the Collective Security Treaty Organization's scope of interest had become analogous to that of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO), in that only an attack by an external party would trigger the collective response of the other member states,<sup>145</sup> and thus one might understand Moscow's inactivity. On the face of it, it would appear that Kyrgyzstan's national interest in relation to security was at stake, and the Russians balked.

The angle rarely examined, though, is the security the CSTO perhaps did provide, albeit behind the scenes. Uzbekistan's infamous dictator, Islam Karimov, has in the past not refrained from violent acts, even having his own citizens boiled or frozen to death,<sup>146</sup> or with having an entire square of peaceful, largely women and children, protestors (who were seeking their husband/fathers' release from jail) shot to death.<sup>147</sup> One might question why he did not act to defend the ethnic Uzbeks of southern Kyrgyzstan during the pogrom.

It is outside of the scope of this research to analyze Uzbekistan's lack of response, but several factors seem likely to have played into Uzbekistan's decision to assist its fellow

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<sup>145</sup> Munlaws. "NATO." University of Ljubljana. <http://www.munlaws.com/nato.html> (accessed August 31, 2013).

<sup>146</sup> Fitzpatrick, Catherine. Eurasianet. "Uzbekistan: So now prisoners are frozen not boiled?" November 4, 2011 (accessed October 28, 2013) <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/64442>

<sup>147</sup> UZNews.net "Uzbek Media Remains Silent on Anniversary of Andijan Massacre." May 17, 2011. (accessed October 28, 2013)

[http://www.uznews.net/news\\_single.php?lng=en&cid=30&sub=top&nid=22757](http://www.uznews.net/news_single.php?lng=en&cid=30&sub=top&nid=22757)

Kyrgyzstan Uzbeks pour into Uzbekistan to the waiting refugee camps without seeking to avenge the bloodshed. One frequent argument is that had someone else been in power, Uzbek tanks would have rolled through Osh.<sup>148</sup> A reason this might not have happened is that the CSTO provides a common defense should one of its member country's security be put at risk by an external actor.

A massive Uzbek (which is not a CSTO member) invasion certainly would have constituted an external threat to Kyrgyzstan, which would have been dwarfed and rapidly outmaneuvered by the much larger more disciplined Uzbek military. The only country with regional authority and military might to assure that the two former Soviet Republics did not battle is the Russian Federation.

The only other immediate threat to Kyrgyz security is associated with the collapse of Afghanistan, which could trigger the collapse of neighboring Tajikistan due to the incursion of former Taliban fighters. Protecting Kyrgyzstan from this are the already existing Russian bases scattered throughout Tajikistan, which were created specifically to combat the threat of Islamists. Moreover, the planned Russian "anti-terrorism" center in Southern Kyrgyzstan (near the borders of both Tajikistan and Uzbekistan) would counter any threat found directly on the Kyrgyz border.

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<sup>148</sup> Agency of National News. "Islam Karimov ne imeet vozmozhnosti vtorgnut'sja v kyrgyzkuju chast' Ferghanskoj doliny." News. ann.kg/news/2499/ислам-каримов-не-имеет-возможности-вторгнуться-в-кыргызскую-часть-ферганской-долины-эрик (accessed August 29, 2013).

### *Discussion of the military aspect of national interest*

Since it is a priority of Kyrgyz national interest to guarantee security from internal and external threats, Russia seems to be the best available choice for the Kyrgyz Republic and in fulfillment of “improving the national defense”, as seen in Table 1. Given the strong Russian-Kyrgyz historical ties and Russia’s involvement and support for Kyrgyz national security through military hardware, training, cash, military bases and treaties of mutual defense, it is hard for the Americans to compete. Additionally, Russia has a strong prerogative to be involved in Central Asia as it acts as a buffer from what was once known as the “bear trap” of the Soviet Union: Afghanistan. By guaranteeing regional peace, Moscow buys peace of mind.

Considering that Russia no longer supports the presence of the American base and apparently has decided to make support for Kyrgyzstan contingent on the expulsion of the Manas Transit Center, it would seem that Kyrgyzstan is acting in its national interest by assuring its own national defense through closer relations with Russia, which de facto means weakening ties with the United States.

In terms of national defense, the United States would be highly unlikely to wish to involve itself in any non-vital Central Asian conflict that does not directly affect the interests of the US. United States policy makers probably also have calculated that Russia is willing to take the lead, and so it costs the U.S. little to walk away and let Kyrgyzstan be pulled back into the Russian sphere of influence. For the Kyrgyz, this is not a loss of sovereignty to Russia, but rather an assurance that Kyrgyzstan will continue to exist.

## Chapter VI: Conclusions

In considering the effects upon the economy, military and politics, the Kyrgyz have consistently benefited more from closer relations with Moscow than with Washington and have thereby acted to serve its national interests. The Kyrgyz Republic is a small country with few international friends; despite this, Russia has made clear that Kyrgyzstan must choose between itself and the United States. It would seem that the short-lived collaboration with the United States reflected general support for the U.S. “War on Terror” resulting from the unique period immediately following September 11, 2001. Since then, the Kyrgyz have again looked north to Moscow. It is clear that close Russo-Kyrgyz relations are in the Kyrgyz national interest given the limited opportunities available elsewhere.

The Russian Federation contributes significantly to the economy of Kyrgyzstan simply by allowing Kyrgyz migrants to come to Russia to work. Russia has been crucial in assisting Kyrgyzstan’s government leaders to establish legitimacy and has volunteered to support Kyrgyzstan in its defense from enemies. Moreover, as the Kyrgyz Soviet-built infrastructure continues to crumble, the Russian government is the only actor likely to take a lead role in helping to rebuild.

It is not a loss for the United States that the Kyrgyz have decided to part ways and to rely on Moscow. Although some may argue that for a country to turn its back on the U.S. in order to strengthen relations with a weakened superpower is not strategic, the U.S. has little need to exert influence over Kyrgyzstan as it could only potentially gain very little in return. The U.S. Transit Center at Manas was not part of a new “Great Game” attempt by the United States to enter Central Asia as part of a larger strategy of covertly carving into Russia’s sphere influence. The

U.S. presence had the singular objective of supporting the war in Afghanistan. After the withdrawal of combat troops from Afghanistan, expected in 2014, the U.S. has little need for the military facility.

The lesson of Kyrgyzstan perhaps also could translate into a more thorough understanding of Tajikistan, which shares a similar security situation and political and economic problems. Perhaps it might be extended as well to other countries that exist in the shadow of neighboring stronger powers.

Given the means by which Moscow reacts historically to countries that do not follow its instructions, Kyrgyzstan would be imprudent to rebuff its benefactor. The worst case scenario -- migrants forced from Russia, debt repayments demanded, the legitimacy of Bishkek's government questioned, and possible invasion of Uzbekistan or the entrance of rogue elements from Tajikistan -- likely would destroy Kyrgyzstan, which could not resolve these matters by itself. Although the U.S. likely would likely not be interested in helping, Russia might well come to the rescue. Until Kyrgyzstan is more self-sufficient economically, more politically developed and has stronger defense forces, it is wise to follow Moscow's lead.

In the recent past, the former Soviet Republics of Georgia and Ukraine have clearly demonstrated for the world - including Kyrgyzstan - that Russia has little patience with countries that do not play the part assigned to them by Moscow. The August 8, 2008 Russian incursion into Georgia, which resulted in the current occupation of parts of sovereign Georgian territory, exhibits that Russia does not hesitate to act punitively when former friends misbehave.

On the other hand, the example of Ukraine choosing to reject future economic trade collaboration with the mighty European Union, in order to be closer with Russia's Eurasian Customs Union (the same Customs Union that Kyrgyzstan is eager to join), drew vast protests of

over 100,000 in Kyiv.<sup>149</sup> Yet, Moscow stated that the proposed EU-Ukraine trade agreement was not in Russia's economic interest (though not denying that it might be in Ukraine's best economic interest), and so Ukraine's leadership decided to reverse six years of negotiations with the European Union, in order to do Russia's bidding.

In both the Ukrainian and Georgian examples, we see even more validation that Russia demands strict loyalty from its "friends" and does not tolerate "new thinking" to this paradigm. Kyrgyzstan does have a choice as to how it conducts itself and with whom it befriends; though, given the multiple factors of economic, political and security, which compromise its "national interest", it is clear that to remain on friendly terms with Russia, by obediently following the path to closer Moscow ties, is the best means of realizing its national interest.

The Kyrgyz Republic continues to pursue closer relations with Russia, which helps to assure that its national interests will be served. Despite the 34% of the Kyrgyz population that opposes considering the option of being annexed by Russia<sup>150</sup> as the U.S. is forced out, for Kyrgyzstan there is really no choice. Only the Russians have consistently managed to assist the Kyrgyz.

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<sup>149</sup> BBC. "Ukraine-EU Trade Deal "Big Threat" to Russian Economy." BBC News.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-25108022> (accessed November 28, 2013)

<sup>150</sup> International Republican Institute "Kyrgyzstan National Opinion Poll."

<http://www.iri.org/sites/default/files/2012%20April%2011%20Survey%20of%20Kyrgyzstan%20Public%20Opinion,%20February%204-27,%202012.pdf> February 2012.

## Future research

The focus of this thesis was quite specific, leaving many questions for future research. One area that likely influences Kyrgyz decision makers, beyond the dimensions of national interest I considered, is the public's opinion of what should be done, which no doubt guides the democratically elected leaders to act as their constituents demand. The general cultural impact of having generations of mutually beneficial relations between the Kyrgyz and Russians likely has strongly influenced most citizens' views of how the countries should interact. Kyrgyzstan seemed to have a clear disposition towards supporting Russia from the start. Indeed, there are even serious questions as to whether the population of Kyrgyzstan would not just prefer to be annexed into the Russian Federation, as the Carnegie Endowment noted.<sup>151</sup> In fact, a February 2012 poll -- done under the auspices of the International Republican Institute (IRI), paid for by and conducted by Baltic Surveys/Gallup Polls -- found that 63% of Kyrgyz believed that Kyrgyzstan should consider "joining Russia" in the future, with 34% opposed. Paradoxically, the same poll found that simultaneously 79% believed that Kyrgyzstan should remain independent compared to 18% who opposed independence.<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> Barnett, Marina. "Should Kyrgyzstan join Russia?" Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. <http://kyrgyzstan.carnegieendowment.org/2010/10/should-kyrgyzstan-join-russia> (accessed October 26, 2013)

<sup>152</sup> International Republican Institute "Kyrgyzstan National Opinion Poll." <http://www.iri.org/sites/default/files/2012%20April%2011%20Survey%20of%20Kyrgyzstan%20Public%20Opinion,%20February%204-27,%202012.pdf> February 2012.

A more general area that needs further investigation is whether a poor and dependent country like Kyrgyzstan, living in the historical, cultural, military, and economic shadow of a giant like Russia, can even create an independent and cohesive foreign policy that reflects its national interest. Or, is national interest merely a product of what the hegemonic power tells it to do? Clearly, history has examples of countries (e.g. the Republic of Cuba) that have balked at doing the bidding of their hegemonic neighbors and have instead chosen to align themselves with other countries, but this seems to be the exception.

This thesis only gave a glimpse of the similarities between how the Kyrgyz and the Tajiks have experienced Russia's coaxing in recent years. Researchers of the former Soviet Union may benefit from more fully comparing Kyrgyz-Russian relations with those of the other former Soviet Republics. For example, countries such as Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan may have shared some of the same experiences as the Kyrgyz. This not only would allow for a more thorough understanding of how Russia acts, but also give insight into what if any real options such former Republics have in formulating policies (domestic or international) that are consistent with their national interest.

Outside of the scope of this thesis but equally valuable to having a stronger understanding of the decisions that were made would have been to research what has motivated Russian officials to operate as they do within Kyrgyzstan. Elements of Russian national pride certainly influence how it attempts to exercise its hegemonic status in relationship with the Kyrgyz. How far and how long this strong interest from Russia will last is a serious question. When the American Transit Center closes, it is not unthinkable that Russia may then have a "change of heart" and choose not to invest billions of dollars in a country that already is beholden to Russia's power.

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