

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Question and Answer

Question

Many things have quickly materialised in Kyrgyzstan. The Opposition moved to oust Bakiyev on 08/04/2010 and succeeded in doing so. They seized authority and Bakiyev fled to his hometown in the south of the country. Then today, the 16/04/2010, he forwarded his resignation and left for Kazakhstan. At the same time one of the first countries to recognize the revolution and 'bless' it was Russia such that the interim Prime Minister Roza Otunbayeva engaged in official (phone) talks between herself and the Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin on Thursday 08/04/2010, the very day the interim government took control. This means that Russia is behind what has occurred. If this is correct then how is it that Russia has ousted Bakiyev whilst she herself brought him to power in the revolution against Akayev in 2005, and supported his most recent election on 23/07/2009? Was his not closing the American military base in Manas the cause which provoked Russia to oust him?

Answer

Yes, all indicators point to Russia being behind the fall of Bakiyev, but not because he renewed the American lease of the Manas base instead of closing it. This is because Russia was in agreement with the base remaining whilst Bakiyev was in power. In fact Russia supported his election on 23/07/2009 after he had renewed the lease contract for the base on 15/07/2009, which was before his election and Russia's supporting him therein. Further, Russia's support for his election was of a remarkable nature, such that the Russian President Medvedev himself came on 02/08/2009 to Kyrgyzstan to partake in the ceremonies of appointment which were held for Bakiyev!

Thus Russia was not provoked by the renewal of the lease for the base. Even the new government which Russia has brought is in agreement with the base remaining, a matter explicitly mentioned by the leaders of the revolution. Hence Russia is okay with the renewal of the lease for the base in origin, and that is for the purpose of placating America and preventing her evil from Russia in the region. Russia considers the Manas base as a 'transit', that is, as passage to and from Afghanistan, an Islamic land and an enemy to both Russia and America. Further, there is no role for this base in internal affairs which affects the influence of Russia.

What actually provoked Russia to remove Bakiyev, their former agent, is another matter, to appreciate which we mention the following occurrences:

Richard Holbrooke, the American envoy to Afghanistan, undertook a visit to Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan on 19/02/2010 and met with the presidents of both nations. The webpage "Russia Today" reported from "Interfax Russia" on 19/02/2010 that Holbrooke discussed with President Bakiyev, "prospects of bilateral relations and the situation in Afghanistan, and the two sides exchanged of views about the situation in Afghanistan away from spotlight, and discussed ways to activate mutual cooperation of interest between both nations." It also mentioned that the press office of the presidency of Kyrgyzstan reported from Bakiyev that he announced that, "his nation attaches importance and priority to developing Kyrgyz-American relations and the activation of bi-lateral cooperation. The Interfax Russia Agency which reported the news was thought to have added the phrase, "away from spotlight", that is, in a secret manner away from Russian eyes so that Russia does not know what her agent Bakiyev has agreed to with

the Americans. This is a hint from Russia that something significant has occurred between the Kyrgyz President and the Americans.

On 17/03/2010 'Russia Today' reported that "the United States has recently announced the allocation of \$5.5 million to assist Kyrgyzstan in building a training centre for special units to combat terrorism in Batken." 'Russia Today' asked Alexander Kniyazev, director of the regional Bishkek branch of the CIS Institute think-tank about the centre, to which he replied, "The United States could use this centre to meet its needs in Central Asia. The slogan of fighting terrorism is only a pretext to achieve American goals as is the case in Iraq and Afghanistan". He added, "The United States is seeking through these projects in Central Asia to challenge and compete with Russia and China in the region."

The Russians had misgivings about Holbrooke's visit to Kyrgyzstan, his meeting with President Bakiyev away from the spotlight, the secret agreements between the two sides - which culminated in the establishment of an American centre in Kyrgyzstan for the training of special forces - and the recruitment of clients under the pretext of so-called counter-terrorism, in order to strengthen American influence in Kyrgyzstan, from where it can then move to other regions.

The agreement to establish an American centre for the training of special forces, or in other words, to train agents of America in Kyrgyzstan, was the matter which hit the alarm bells for Russia and meant that the red lines were being approached. Therefore Russia hastened to the coup to prevent the persistence of Bakiyev and his relationship with America, and it was clear that Russia was ecstatic with its victory in implementing the coup against Bakiyev.

As for America, she was shocked. The official spokesman of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Philip Crowley, announced "deep concern over the unrest in Kyrgyzstan," and said, "We believe that the government is still in power, and the United States does not have information that the opposition has taken over" (News of the World, 04/07/2010). This indicates that America was concerned about what was going on and did not support the opposition, but rather was with the Government of Bakiyev. America closed its base in Kyrgyzstan for three days and then re-opened after the leader of the interim Kyrgyz government Rosa Otunbayeva announced that the U.S. base will not be affected and will remain on according to previous agreements.

Submitting to reality, the United States recognized the new government implicitly such that it sent an envoy, Assistant Secretary of State Robert Blake, to hold talks with the new government in Kyrgyzstan. He announced that the United States was satisfied with the promises of the new authorities to ensure the survival of American Manas base, and described this as being appreciable. America now wants to deal with the new reality, particularly as it has ensured the survival of the Manas air base, and that it has become evident that she cannot do anything against this new reality, whereby Bakiyev has fled to his village in the south of the country, and from there has left for Kazakhstan.

Thus, America has no alternative than to deal with the new reality, even if only temporarily. For Russia has negotiated on the current situation in Kyrgyzstan. The Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Russia, Gregory Karasin, met with the US ambassador in Moscow, John Beyrle, on 13/04/2010. The two discussed the situation in Kyrgyzstan, and showed that they had agreed, such that they both called for "a return to normality in the country"! Notwithstanding all this, the conflict will continue between Russia and America in that region, and will manifest in various actions and forms, and in political, economic and social turmoil.

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