

Kyrgyzstan President promotes 'renaissance of the Silk Road'

by Mark Burdman

The University of Bonn in Germany was the scene of an important international policy declaration Sept. 14, when Dr. Askar Akayev, President of the Central Asian republic of Kyrgyzstan, delivered a major address, on the theme, "The Diplomacy of the Great Silk Road." The event was sponsored by the Bonn-based Center for European Integration, a research institute founded in 1994. President Akayev spoke at the Center as part of a state visit to Germany.

In his introductory remarks, Akayev noted that he is "the author of the doctrine of the diplomacy of the Great Silk Road." The "Great Silk Road," Akayev stressed, brings together the destinies of Asia, Europe, and Africa. Today's "rebirth of the Great Silk Road" makes possible the creation of a "zone of stability, friendship, cooperation, security and partnership" in the world. He declared that the Great Silk Road was critical for the "development of civilization," including in its "spiritual and philosophical" domains.

He said he was in Germany, because, given its "key role" in East-West relations, it could make an important contribution to these positive dynamics.

President Akayev had also hosted a summit Aug. 24-25 in Kyrgyzstan's capital, Bishkek, for the so-called Shanghai Five, comprising the three Central Asian states of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Kazakstan, as well as Russia and China. That meeting worked out important protocols for cooperation on the economy, security, and in other domains. Akayev informed his Bonn audience, that he is the chairman of "The Group of Central Asian countries."

Transport is key

One crucial point of emphasis made by the Kyrgyz President, was on "transport projects" in the Great Silk Road region. He said that "the significance of these projects is enormous, not only economically but politically. These projects are a contribution to peace, and peace is a precondition for

the economic renaissance of the Great Silk Road."

At one point in his address, Akayev praised the building of a rail line between China and Uzbekistan, through Kyrgyzstan. He hoped for a European role in the development of what he called "*the project of the century*," namely "the rail lines going from Shanghai to Paris." He also welcomed the "very active" work of the European Union in railway projects, evidently referring to the "Trans-European Nets," also known as the "Delors Plan" sponsored by the former European Commission President Jacques Delors, for the building of an array of rail projects throughout different parts of western, eastern, and central Europe.

Akayev pointed to the key role of his country as "a bridge of friendship and cooperation" for the vast region extending from "Portugal to Japan." Kyrgyzstan, he explained, is an important "transit land" for various countries, for example, for the shipments of oil and gas from Turkmenistan and Kazakstan to China and Japan. He said that the Japanese were very interested in building ties in Central Asia, to secure energy supplies from this region.

Akayev stressed that "we have built wonderful relations with China." He said an agreement had been reached with the Chinese authorities, to keep borders open between the two countries. China has also granted an "air corridor" to Kyrgyzstan, which will ensure that in the coming years, flights via Kyrgyzstan will offer the shortest route from Europe to Southeast Asia. At one point, he asserted that one of the key features of his country, is its "Confucian philosophy and Confucian spirit."

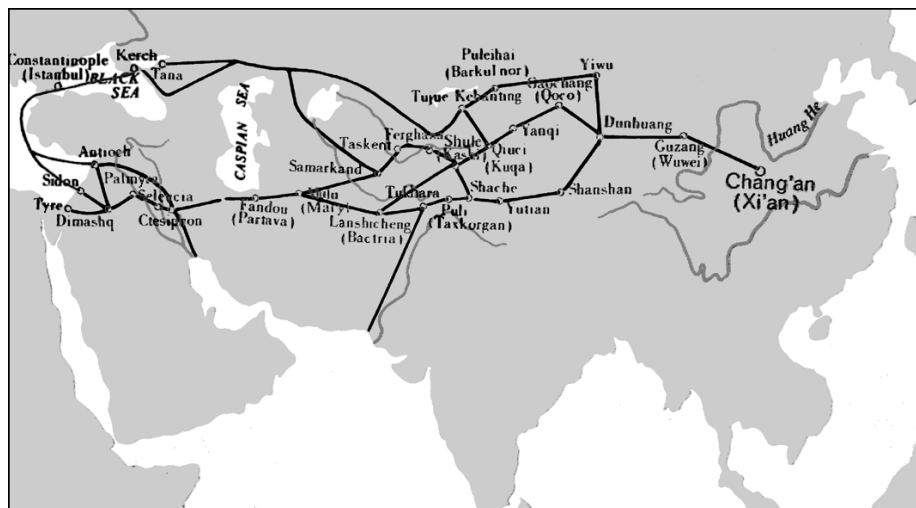
Containing Brzezinski?

Although Akayev's speech was also interlaced with praise for "liberal economics," "liberalism," "globalization," and the like, his speech offered an alternative to the resource wars and destabilization impinging on the region.

FIGURE 1
Main land routes of the silk trade, circa 1100 A.D.



Kyrgyzstan President Askar Akayev



Source: *The Silk Road on Land and Sea*, China Pictorial Publishing Co.

The Kyrgyzstan President also reflected on the threats to security in the Central Asian region, and the broader region of Eurasia.

During the question and answer period, *EIR* asked Akayev whether he was aware of the “forecast” by Brzezinski and his co-thinkers in London, that the next years would see the eruption of a “Eurasian Balkans,” and what role he saw Germany and Europe playing, to create a Eurasian dynamic of peace and development as opposed to the geopolitical aims of Brzezinski and his backers (see “Brzezinski Plays Britain’s ‘Great Game’ in Central Asia,” *EIR*, Sept. 10, 1999).

Akayev began his answer, by saying that “I’ve very often spoken to Dr. Brzezinski, on the perspectives for Eurasia in the 21st century. He has made many prophesies. I see him as the ‘Nostradamus of the 21st century.’ This danger of a Balkans war is very real, after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Dr. Brzezinski prophesied war in the Balkans, 10 years before it happened. What he talks about, is a possible scenario.”

Having said this, Akayev was quick to add that precisely this danger was the reason he was “very active to reactivate the Great Silk Road,” to extend “cultural exchanges,” and to try to recreate the “Golden Age” of the Silk Road of the 9th to 11th century,” to reinforce “freedom, peace and prosperity” in the region. He affirmed that “Europe must make a contribution” to a “stable Central Asia,” through encouraging transport projects and the like. Living standards in the region should be brought up, over time, to European levels. “Germany has a key role in Central Asia, to bring peace, stability, welfare, and prosperity,” the President affirmed.

Another question also dealt with the regional threats to peace and stability. In response, Akayev declared: “Our region is very troubled. There are many causes. The main problem is the civil war in Afghanistan. Afghanistan is one of the

main sources of drugs, extremism, and export of terrorism. As long as there is no peace in Afghanistan, and also in Tajikistan, there are risks of destabilization.”

To fight this, “we want cooperation with the West, and, in the first line, Germany. Germany is our most important partner.” He recalled positively, the 1998 visit to his country by German President Roman Herzog, on the occasion of which there were agreements signed to fight organized crime, terrorism, and extremism.

Von Humboldt in Central Asia

At various points during his address, and in the question and answer period, Dr. Akayev lauded the contributions made by German scientists to the understanding of the Central Asian region.

He noted, for example, the work done, over 160 years ago, by the great German scientist Alexander von Humboldt in the Tian Shan mountain regions in Kyrgyzstan and China. He revealed that there was a special project planned, for early in the next century, by German scientists, geologists, and others, to come to Kyrgyzstan, to commemorate this work.

Earlier, he had praised one Ferdinand von Richthofen, who intensively studied the geology of China, during the 19th century, and did essential work on the history of the Silk Road. Von Richthofen is famous among scholars of the “Silk Road” for his four-volume history of China.

Akayev himself is a physicist, and a member of both the Kyrgyzstan and New York Academy of Sciences.

For previous *EIR* coverage, see the interview with Dr. Apas Jumagulov, ambassador of Kyrgyzstan to Germany and former Prime Minister, in *EIR*, Nov. 13, 1998. See also *EIR*, April 9, 1999 for publication of the Kyrgyz Republic’s Silk Road doctrine.