

Conflicting Interests in Central Asia:
A Predictive Study on the Future of Manas Transit Center

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"Nearly all men can stand adversity, but if you want to test a man's character, give him power."

-Abraham Lincoln

I. Introduction

The April 2010 coup in Kyrgyzstan resulted in the ousting of the President Bakiyev and his associated regime. An interim government rose to power in the aftermath and announced their decision to establish a parliamentary form of government (Nichol, *The April 2010 coup in Kyrgyzstan and its aftermath: context and implications for U.S. interests* 2010). This announcement changed the established path of the Kyrgyz government, and the new government has yet to decide whether Eastern or Western powers will prove to be most influential. The power struggle between Eastern powers, such as Russia, and Western powers, such as the United States, in Central Asia is a topic that necessitates further study. This issue will significantly impact the ongoing war in Afghanistan, and it evokes the question: will the United States be able to maintain secure supply lines into Afghanistan for the duration of the war?

Central Asia is extremely rich in energy resources and is a vital conduit for the transportation of supplies between Asia and the West; therefore, many countries have a strong interest in investing in the region and controlling the decisions that shape it. To this end, both Russia and the United States have made efforts to increase their influence in the region, especially in Kyrgyzstan. Russia has maintained an interest in the country since its incorporation

in the Soviet Union. Additionally, it has continued its efforts to ensure the general stability and security of the region, and to influence the flow of energy resources.

The United States had only a general interest in the region prior to September 11, 2001 because of its strategic location near historically antagonistic countries. After the terrorist attacks in 2001 the US recognized an opportunity that Central Asia could provide. By establishing a stronger presence in countries like Kyrgyzstan, the US was able to attempt to execute a three-part strategy in the region: secure supply lines into Afghanistan, monitor the potential spread of terrorist organizations into a region that it believed may be susceptible to extremist influence, and develop secure access to Caspian energy (The NATO Archive: Russia and Central Asia 2005).

In order to secure its presence in the region and attempt to accomplish its goals, the US decided to establish military bases in various countries in Central Asia. The country that proved to be the best host and provided the most useful access was Kyrgyzstan. In 2001, the US attained its first goal in the region and established Manas Airbase in Kyrgyzstan. The country benefited both economically and politically from the establishment of the transit center, but Russia has not always been supportive of Western presence in its sphere of influence. This study will further investigate this conflict of interest, and will attempt to answer the question: how will the political unrest in Kyrgyzstan affect US interests at Manas Transit Center? To provide a thorough analysis, various outside sources were consulted, and the knowledge gained is applied in a structured analytical technique known as the Lockwood Analytical Method for Prediction.

II. Literature Review

The coup in April 2010 was not the first instance of political unrest in Kyrgyzstan. In 2005, Kurmanbek Bakiyev, rose to power on the coat tails of the Tulip Revolution, ending the post-Soviet reign of Askar Akayev. This change was supported by most of the populace, which helped to enable a smooth transition; however, the mid-2000s was a time of unrest and change across Central Asia that brought in new governments and nominal new freedoms (Olcott, Kyrgyzstan's "Tulip Revolution" 2005). From 2003 to 2005, Georgia experienced the Rose Revolution, the Orange Revolution occurred in Ukraine, and the Tulip Revolution changed the face of politics in Kyrgyzstan (Wilson 2010). As the tides of political influence continued to change in Kyrgyzstan, the United States had to constantly reassess the future of its key logistics hub located on the outskirts of Kyrgyzstan's capital city, Bishkek. This round of political change provides a backdrop and starting point for analysts to consider the political unrest in Central Asia today.

The occurrence of a revolution and establishment of a new governmental regime in the recent past provides a wealth of historical literature to apply to the predictive analysis of Kyrgyzstan's political future. Although the existing literature does not often discuss the long-term future of Manas Transit Center, it does highlight US interests in the region and the importance for the US to maintain the logistics base, given the current state of unrest. Current articles, reports, and papers contribute vital knowledge about the political and economic interests of the major actors in the region. Additionally, they provide valuable insight into potential courses of action based on analysis of their reactions to the 2005 Tulip Revolution. This paper intends to further explore the predictive aspect of future US interests that is currently not addressed in the existing wealth of literature. It will also further investigate how the external and

internal influences acting on Kyrgyzstan will specifically affect the US lease on Manas Transit Center.

Ibbotson and Lovell-Hoare (2010) give a historical overview of how Kyrgyzstan developed politically and economically since its independence from the Soviet Union in 1991 (Ibbotson and Lovell-Hoare 2010). The article is a journalistic piece that uses a historical approach to present a detailed and vivid background to life in Kyrgyzstan after the breakup of the Soviet Union. The expansive use of imagery-based writing instead of simply presenting facts diminishes some of the reliability of the article; however, the facts that are presented are solid and significantly add to the information provided. A limited pro-Russian bias is apparent in explanations of external influences on Kyrgyzstani politics, but it does not detract from the overall validity of the article.

The article provides outstanding background knowledge on the ever-changing situation in the country. Ibbotson and Lovell-Hoare explain how the loss of the Soviet Union as a trading partner significantly impacted the economy; it caused Kyrgyzstan to lose 98% of its traditional trading market. A power vacuum resulted and led to the rise of wide-ranging corruption throughout a government that was already overburdened by its attempts to balance the conflicting US and Russian interests. The country's future looked bleak, but the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001 and the resulting conflict in Afghanistan proved to be a saving grace for Kyrgyzstan. Its location, reasonably permissible terrain, cooperative attitude, and functioning airstrip made it the ultimate regional ally of the United States, which provided the economic boost the country needed to survive. However, the improved economic conditions were not enough and the post-Soviet government collapsed, to be replaced by the Bakiyev regime (Ibbotson and Lovell-Hoare 2010). This article expands current literature by providing a detailed

historical framework for the progression of political change in Kyrgyzstan and how external influences caused those changes to occur.

Nichol (2010) picks up the story of the Kyrgyzstani political change where Ibbotson and Lovell-Hoare ended. The author focuses more on the April 2010 coup that brought Roza Otunbayeva to power as the interim president (Nichol, *The April 2010 coup in Kyrgyzstan and its aftermath: context and implications for U.S. interests* 2010). Nichol is an expert in Eurasian affairs and presents a well researched and fact-based explanation of the situation in Kyrgyzstan and what it means for United States politicians. The report was intended as an informative paper to orient decision makers with the history and developments in the country. Due to this, the author presents the information in a way that is clearly intended for a political audience, focusing on ideas of democratic reform and emphasizing logistics opportunities for Afghanistan (Nichol, *The April 2010 coup in Kyrgyzstan and its aftermath: context and implications for U.S. interests* 2010). The primary oversight in the report is the lack of consideration given to Kyrgyzstan's ability to successfully adopt much of the democratic reform that the author suggests. Although this is a clear oversight, it does not reduce the reliability of the information presented in any measurable way.

Unlike many other papers and articles about the coup, Nichol readily identifies the reasons the coup occurred and the resulting implications for both Kyrgyzstan and the international community. He explains that the coup was largely brought on by the combination of discontent over rising utility prices and the government's repression of the people. It is important to note that the revolt was not brought on by ethnic tensions, although ethnic violence did break out in the more diverse southern city of Osh (Nichol, *The April 2010 coup in Kyrgyzstan and its aftermath: context and implications for U.S. interests* 2010). A key feature of

the report that differentiates it from many of the other articles in existence is the discussion of the various international responses to the coup. Nichol discusses how Russia was not a supporter of the former president and pledged its support to the new government very quickly, while the US was more hesitant in its response. It is interesting to note that China's somewhat neutral reaction to the coup was also discussed because it is often overlooked in other articles (Nichol, The April 2010 coup in Kyrgyzstan and its aftermath: context and implications for U.S. interests 2010).

Nichol explained the situation in terms of the international acceptance of the new government, but did not clarify how Kyrgyzstan itself was adapting to the change. Marat (2010) continues the discussion by explaining how the local populace was adjusting to the new government (Marat 2010). Although limited in its length and subsequent detail, the article has little obvious bias. The author employs a journalistic optimistic worldview to illustrate the return to normal daily life in the country. She does not convey any personal opinion in her discussion of the return to normal patterns of life, limiting one potential source of bias. The author glosses over concrete facts in favor of telling a more enticing story, which diminishes the strength of some of her arguments; however, there is no political or social bias apparent in the presentation.

The article recognizes the chaos that ensued directly after the coup, but explains that only a few months after President Otunbayeva took over, things began to settle. This was in no small part due to the president's attempts to reform the government and appease the disgruntled populace. Marat highlights how Otunbayeva has attempted to lower utility prices, represent all ethnicities fairly, allow more freedom of the press, and attract professionals and experts into positions of power. The author explains that many of the locals still do not overtly trust the government, but they are beginning to realize the changes the new government is implementing

(Marat 2010). The article expands on the current base of knowledge by providing insight into the daily life of the local populace that is often overlooked in favor of a more strategic outlook.

Analysis of the implications of the Kyrgyz coup and political changeover for Russia necessitates a broader reaching outlook. Wilson (2010) provides an in-depth analytical study of how Russia has adapted to the changing political atmosphere in Central Asia over the decades following the fall of the Soviet Union (Wilson 2010). The author uses a pragmatic worldview to analyze Russia's reactions to democratic changes near its borders and assess how the Western presence influences Russia's political actions. The article is presented in a scholarly journal and provides a relatively unbiased discussion of Russia's motivations in the region, and how it views the external encroachment on an area that it considers its traditional sphere of influence. Instead of supporting either a pro-democracy or anti-democracy stance, the author simply discusses the ideas behind the Color Revolutions and presents the facts, thereby limiting the bias. However, the analysis is significantly limited by only discussing Russia's interpretation of the situation after the Color Revolutions already took place, instead of explaining the situation that led to the occurrence of the revolutions in the first place.

The article discusses the Orange Revolution in Ukraine, the Rose Revolution in Georgia, and the Tulip Revolution in Kyrgyzstan. Wilson explains that Kyrgyzstan's revolution was the least extreme of the three because the transition occurred more smoothly and there were fewer ideological differences involved than in the other two revolutions. Although it was not as extreme as the others, Russia was still concerned with the 2005 Tulip Revolution because it feared the spread of Western support and democratic ideals throughout its border regions. Therefore, Russia eventually took steps to undermine the pro-West Bakiyev and limit the influence of the US in the former Soviet state. The article points out that the fear of increasing US

influence affects Russia's foreign policy in the region to this day, and it may have influenced its decision to so quickly recognize the new Kyrgyzstani government (Wilson 2010). This paper expands the current literature by providing a context for Russian actions in the region that is based on past occurrences and provides insight into how Russia may react to similar situations in the future.

McDermott (2010) continues the discussion of Russia's interests in the region in context of modern day events. He explains that although Russia most certainly wants to limit Western influence in the region, it may be reluctant to throw its entire support and influence behind the new Kyrgyz government (McDermott 2010). The article compiles multiple reliable open-source articles to present a journalistic scholarly piece on Russia's hesitance. The article explains how Russia ideologically supported the coup against Bakiyev but hid behind the Russian-led Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) to avoid lending the actual physical support that Otunbayeva requested from Kyrgyzstan's powerful neighbor (McDermott 2010). The article contributes to the existing base of literature by showing how Russia may not be able fulfill the requirements of being the regional leader it claims to be. The article points out that Russia's reluctance to step in and take control, even when requested, could leave an opportunity for other regional powers, such as China, to gain influence in the region and change the future outlook of politics.

Similar to McDermott, Blagov (2010) also comments on Russia's ability to help the unstable Kyrgyz government after the April coup. However, unlike McDermott, Blagov highlights how Russia was willing to help Kyrgyzstan with increased humanitarian assistance, and how the country urged Kyrgyzstan to hold early elections to help legitimize the new government. He explains that Russia had become disillusioned with the Bakiyev regime and

their continual waffling on decisions that impacted Russia; therefore, the country hoped that by supporting the new government, it would make Otunbayeva's regime more willing to cooperate with Russian goals than Bakiyev's (Blagov 2010). This article also compiles reliable open-source data to present a journalistic report, and has very little bias because it primarily concentrates on compiling and summarizing the various news reports on the subject instead of putting the author's own commentary into the article. The author fails to include Moscow's specific view on the overall situation in Kyrgyzstan and how it is handling the situation within their own country, but this oversight does not detract from the article.

In his report to Congress, Nichol (2009) examines the conflicting interests of Russia and the US in Central Asia. The author discusses Russia's long-term interest in the amount of Western influence in Central Asia, while also considering the benefits the logistics center in Kyrgyzstan brings to the US (Nichol, Kyrgyzstan's closure of the Manas Airbase: context and implications 2009). In the report, the author traces former President Bakiyev's decision on whether or not he should close the US logistics center, known then as Manas Airbase. The report presents a fact-based, descriptive account of the situation in 2009 that prompted Bakiyev to consider closing Manas, and interprets the international influences acting on the president through a rational scope. The report demonstrates a balanced view of the situation using reliable facts and details, and limits any possible political bias that could arise. Additionally, the author recognizes the purpose of the paper as an assessment of the overall cost of maintaining the airbase for Congress and stays true to its intent.

Nichol explains that "over its lifetime, the Manas airbase has been the premier point of access to and from Afghanistan for most U.S. military and contract personnel." In 2001, the US brokered a deal with Kyrgyzstan to expand and use the airstrip outside of Bishkek, and Bakiyev

honored that agreement when he took power. However, the report points out that by February of 2009, the Central Asian countries were beginning to become more inhospitable to US interests, and Bakiyev decided to reverse his decision with strong Russian approval. Russia presented a strong argument to Kyrgyzstan, primarily by offering economic benefits in an unsaid exchange for Kyrgyzstan to close Manas Airbase. For Russia, this move would eliminate the largest and most permanent Western threat near its borders. The report emphasizes that if Bakiyev were to accept Russia's deal, the economic implications for US supply lines into Afghanistan would be considerable (Nichol, Kyrgyzstan's closure of the Manas Airbase: context and implications 2009). The report expands the current base of knowledge because it provides an unbiased and economic interpretation of how losing Manas Transit Center would affect US interests. Although the situation being studied occurred in 2009, it is a near-perfect mirror-image of what could likely occur under the new Kyrgyz regime.

Similar to Nichol, Arnoldy (2010) examines what the unrest in Kyrgyzstan could mean for US interests, but the article takes a more immediate and US-centric view of the situation directly after the protests. He explains that the agreement over Manas Transit Center is a very lucrative deal for both Kyrgyzstan and the US because it provides Kyrgyzstan with a stable source of income and the US with a well-placed logistics hub to support its efforts in Afghanistan. He explains that the new government will likely want to maintain ties with the west and therefore continue to honor the past rent agreements, but that there may be renegotiations over the contract in the future. Arnoldy illustrates that immediately after the protests broke out April, experts' opinions were split over whether the new government would seek Russian or US support, and that decision is still unclear. Although there are alternate supply routes available to the US, the loss of Manas Transit Center would increase the time and

money it takes to get supplies into Afghanistan (Arnoldy 2010). The timeliness of the article provides valuable interpretations of the situation directly after the protests began, and gives helpful insight about how unstable and unclear the situation is in Kyrgyzstan. There is a clear US filter used in the interpretation of the situation, which displays some mirror-imaging and imparts a pointed bias to the article, but it does not notably detract from the usefulness of the information.

Other sources were used in this study as a point of reference; however, they are part of the current literature and provide reliable background information. They do not necessitate a literature review because they do not actually expand on the current base of literature; they simply support it. It is evident through existing research that the situation in Kyrgyzstan is still unstable and has numerous internal and external pressures influencing it. Fortunately for this study, there is a wealth of analysis about previous events in Kyrgyzstan that provide a background and framework to assess what will happen in the future. It is still unclear which country Otunbayeva's regime will eventually turn to for the majority of its support, and Russia and the United States both have strong interests in the region. It would be a devastating setback to US supply lines if the new government decided to close Manas, but future decisions regarding the airbase remain unclear. This paper will attempt to clarify the most likely course of action for the new Kyrgyz government regarding Manas Transit Center.

III. Actors and Perceptions

Issues surrounding political unrest are of great concern to many countries. In the interconnected region of Central Asia, unrest in one state can easily flow across borders and affect the surrounding states. Although the current unrest in Kyrgyzstan will undoubtedly draw

the interest of multiple states in the region, there are only a handful of states with a significant amount of vested interest in the country. The United States and Russia have been providing humanitarian and economic aid and investing in the country since 2001, and both would be significantly affected by any further unrest. A flashpoint for the conflict of interests in the region between the US and Russia is the existence of Manas Transit Center and how Kyrgyzstan will handle the US lease on the airbase in the future. To best understand how each of these three countries will react to Manas Transit Center in the future, the influences on each country and their decision making processes must be examined.

Kyrgyzstan

Kyrgyzstan has gone through many evolutions and changes since its independence from the Soviet Union in 1991. It developed a fragile democracy under the helm of President Askar Akayev in the years following the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Poor economic conditions and endemic corruption brought the downfall of the Akayev regime. A fairly bloodless coup, known as the Tulip Revolution, brought a new government into power, led by President Kurmanbek Bakiyev, which claimed to be more democratic and free. Unfortunately, for the second time in less than two decades, domestic struggles and widespread corruption brought on a second and more violent coup, which led to the flight of President Bakiyev and the rise to power of a new government, currently led by Roza Otunbayeva (Nichol, The April 2010 coup in Kyrgyzstan and its aftermath: context and implications for U.S. interests 2010).

Regardless of who was in charge at the time, the United States has worked with the Kyrgyz government to secure and maintain a contract providing the US access to Manas Transit Center. The three varying governments that have been in power since 1991 have reacted in diverse ways to international pressures and cooperation with US interests. All three governments

that have existed since the creation of the transit center have had different views on the influence of Russia and the United States, and have attempted to establish domestic prosperity in various ways. By studying how each government interacted with the international influences and the factors that led both coups to succeed, a pattern of action and reaction can be established, which provides insight into how the current government will balance the multiple international and domestic pressures it will face. This balancing act will be what inevitably decides what choice Kyrgyzstan will make about Manas Transit Center.

Askar Akayev rose to power in the 1990s after the fall of the Soviet Union, and he was the first real president in years to lead a truly independent Kyrgyzstan. President Akayev faced the daunting task of developing a country that had no real experience with independence into a thriving democratic outpost in a former Soviet sphere. Instead of turning into the democratic ideal the US hoped for, Kyrgyzstan became an economically weak country with a corrupt and authoritarian regime still heavily reliant on Russia (Smith 2010). However, after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the US realized that Kyrgyzstan offered an ideal opportunity for force projection into a region much closer to the growing war in Afghanistan. It struck a deal with the Akayev government to establish a military base at Manas international airport, located near the Kyrgyz capital of Bishkek (Nichol, The April 2010 coup in Kyrgyzstan and its aftermath: context and implications for U.S. interests 2010).

Known as Manas Airbase at the time, the location in Central Asia provided a prime staging post for US troops and supplies making their way to Afghanistan to support the war effort. The country's ideal location, combined with the United States' continued efforts in the region to increase territorial and political integrity, human rights, and weapon proliferation culminated in \$953.5 million (US) in aid between FY1992-FY2008 (Nichol, The April 2010

coup in Kyrgyzstan and its aftermath: context and implications for U.S. interests 2010). Manas Airbase was clearly providing vast economic benefits to the country and was an import logistics post that the US was desperate to maintain. Therefore, when domestic unrest reached a tipping point in 2005, the future of Manas Airbase was in question.

President Akayev was eventually removed from power by various internal factors that led to wide-spread domestic unrest. His alleged democracy was systemically corrupt. He knowingly allowed electoral fraud and poorly handled the accumulating public unrest. He tried to assuage his opponents by allowing a committee to form to rewrite the constitution, but never actually allowed that rewrite to see the light of day. His opponents had enough. Akayev sensed the change in opinion and turned to Russia for support, but even specialized training by Russian security forces was not enough to quell the unrest. In March, after the well-liked presidential candidate, Kurmanbek Bakiyev, lost the election and claimed election fraud, the public rallied behind him and his political affiliates. In only a few days, they managed to secure control over the southern half of the country and eventually forced the departure of Akayev, opening the capital and the rest of the country to their control (Olcott, Lessons of the Tulip Revolution 2005).

President Kurmanbek Bakiyev's rise to power is known as the Tulip Revolution and was supposed to be a promising triumph of democracy over an inept and corrupt regime. However, Bakiyev's regime was strikingly similar to that of recently ousted Akayev. Although initially there were promising signs of change, as Bakiyev became more comfortable with power, he also became more corrupt. Throughout his term as president, he cracked down on independent journalism, appointed under-qualified family and friends to important posts, and likely funneled important international economic support into his personal bank accounts (Pannier 2009).

The extent of his corruption and political gaming is made exceptionally clear through his dealings and decisions regarding Manas Airbase. Believed to be more pro-West than his predecessor, the fate of Manas Airbase after the Tulip Revolution seemed to be secure, but as time went on this security proved to be questionable. Bakiyev maintained the economically lucrative rent and supply agreements with the United States regarding Manas Airbase and even illegally invested in many of the shadow companies involved with the airbase. The president had a vested interest in continuing the operations of the airbase on Kyrgyz soil, but in 2009 Russia made an offer Bakiyev had a difficult time refusing. In an effort to diminish US presence in the region, President Medvedev offered “\$2 billion in developmental loans and a further \$150 million in aid,” which Bakiyev accepted. Although not explicitly stated, this agreement more or less hinged on Kyrgyzstan’s closure of Manas Airbase (Ibbotson and Lovell-Hoare 2010).

Bakiyev accepted this generous offer, but months later reneged on his promise and renegotiated a \$60 million rent agreement with the US to renew its lease on the airport, as long the name was changed to Manas Transit Center and security for the base was handed over to Kyrgyz forces (Nichol, Kyrgyzstan's closure of the Manas Airbase: context and implications 2009). Russian leaders viewed this “as an unpleasant surprise,” and started a media campaign that exposed much of President Bakiyev’s corrupt dealings and blamed Kyrgyz hardships on his poor management. Bakiyev did not learn his lesson from the ousting of his predecessor. His corrupt practices, poor management of the economy, and efforts to diminish the democratic institutions in the country led to riots in April 2010, eventually causing him to flee to the southern city of Osh and finally out of the country (Ibbotson and Lovell-Hoare 2010).

An interim government, led by former foreign minister Roza Otunbayeva, was able to consolidate control of the country in a matter months. Amid the chaos of protests and ethnic

violence in the south, Otunbayeva was able to establish the interim government on the world stage, recognized by the US and Russia alike, and put in place policies which will lead to political reform. Although many in the country still distrust the new government and worry it will once again turn into a corrupt authoritarian regime, there are promising signs of change, such as upcoming free elections, increased freedom of the press, and a new constitution (Marat 2010). The new government immediately made its support of Russian influence in the region clear by calling on it for assistance amid the chaos, but it has also pledged to honor standing international agreements (Blagov 2010).

Once again, there is a new government in control in Kyrgyzstan and the security of US investments in Manas Transit Center must be reevaluated. The Kyrgyz government is investigating possible corrupt deals regarding jet fuel suppliers to the transit center, but, at this times, seems willing to allow the existence of the transit center (Nichol, The April 2010 coup in Kyrgyzstan and its aftermath: context and implications for U.S. interests 2010). Eventually the rent agreement may have to be renegotiated with the new government, but the international support of both the US and Russia is too important to the country to back out of the deal at this point in time (Arnoldy 2010). To assess the likely future of Manas Transit Center, it will be important to monitor the development of the new government. If they follow the pattern of the two previous regimes, more instability and protests can be expected which will threaten the security of US interests. Additionally, the extent that Otunbayeva's regime leans on Russia for support in the future will be a key indicator of possible efforts to close the logistics center.

Russia

Since its reign over the region as the Soviet Union, Russia has had a special interest in Central Asia. The Central Asian states were one of its primary trading partners, and following

the breakup of the Soviet Union, Russia's interest in the region adapted somewhat to revolve around security concerns and access to vital energy resources. The region is rich in natural gas, but is also susceptible to the influence of extremist groups and non-Russian international pressures. Russia wants to maintain its sphere of influence, guaranteeing the country access to the valuable gas resources and keeping opposing Western influences from the region (Kortunov 1998).

Although Kyrgyzstan is not Russia's only concern in the region, it is an important state to help it ensure the success of its goals. Additionally, it has gained importance in the Russian mindset as the presence of the United States has increased through Manas Transit Center. Kyrgyzstan itself has no major strategic or economic resources to offer that would entice Russia's focus, but its geographic location makes it highly valuable. It encircles the rich land located within the Fergana Valley, is a major conduit to move supplies from Asia into Europe, and provides a reliable location from which to monitor Chinese movements in the region (Goodrich 2010). Therefore, although Kyrgyzstan does not offer much economic gain itself, maintaining control of its strategic geographic location both enables Russia to benefit from lucrative trading and monitor nefarious forces in the region. In order to maintain this control, Russia has exerted varying degrees of influence on the government of Kyrgyzstan.

In the 1990s, when President Akayev was in power, he was primarily a pro-Russian leader and maintained a positive relationship with Kyrgyzstan's powerful northern neighbor. Although Russia did not display a significant amount of interest in the country during the 1990s, after Akayev agreed to the establishment of Manas Airbase in 2001, Russian interest reasserted itself in the region. Not wanting the United States to be the only foreign military presence in the region, Russia demanded the reopening of Kant Air Base east of Bishkek. When the airbase

opened in 2003, it was the first overseas airbase opened by the Russian military since 1991 and provided a counterbalancing influence against the US airbase that was located nearby. Both countries maintaining military bases and economic interests in Kyrgyzstan allowed Russia and the United States to play a political game of influence in the country by backing different political players that provided them the most benefit (Ibbotson and Lovell-Hoare 2010).

Although neither Russia nor the US became the dominant influence during that time, the Tulip Revolution and rise to power of Bakiyev threatened to upset the fine balance. The Tulip Revolution arrived on the heels of other pro-democratic and Western supported revolutions in the region. From Russia's perspective, it seemed like Europe and the United States were gaining an unprecedented amount of influence in the region it considered within its sphere of influence, and it concerned the Russian leaders. The country was primarily worried about the spread of Western influence beyond the borders of Central Asia and possibly into its own country. Although the Color Revolutions did not attain many of the lofty democratic goals the Western observers had hoped for, it did not prevent Russia from taking appropriate counter-measures as a precaution (Wilson 2010).

Russia believed that President Bakiyev's coup was supported by Western powers, and it was an area of concern for the country. Although Bakiyev allowed Russian presence to remain in Kyrgyzstan through Kant Airbase, Russia felt it needed to also diminish US influence. Therefore, in 2009 Russia offered over \$2 billion in aid and infrastructure projects. Russia never directly stated that this aid was tied to Kyrgyzstan's closure of Manas Transit Center, but it was implied, and Bakiyev agreed to the loans. It is interesting to note that Russia offered this deal to Kyrgyzstan knowing that the country could never repay the loans in full, but diminishing the US

influence was enough of an incentive for Russia to shoulder the potential economic losses (Ibbotson and Lovell-Hoare 2010).

Only a few months after Kyrgyzstan accepted the Russian aid, Bakiyev reversed his decision and agreed to keep Manas open after the US offered a substantial increase in rent for the airbase and overall aid to the country. This reversal sparked strong anti-Bakiyev feelings in Russia, which began a media campaign to reduce Bakiyev's credibility and power in the country. The existing domestic discontent over corrupt politics and rising utility prices was fueled by the Russian media campaign and triggered the overthrow of the Bakiyev government through a coup in April 2010 (Nichol, The April 2010 coup in Kyrgyzstan and its aftermath: context and implications for U.S. interests 2010).

At first glance, the new Otunbayeva government seems to be decidedly more pro-Russian than the previous government. Although the allegations that the unrest in April was connected to Russia were never confirmed, many still believe it had a hand in the coup. Additionally, Otunbayeva has publicly thanked Russia for its support during the chaotic time (Blagov 2010).

Russia recognized the new regime quickly, but has been slow to commit full support until it can see where the country is headed. When President Otunbayeva called upon Russia to send aid and troops during the height of the unrest in June, Russia was reluctant to send any kind of military aid in support of an issue it viewed as domestic and not international (McDermott 2010). Russia still wants to reduce the influence of the United States in Kyrgyzstan, but it seems to be waiting to make any official move in that direction until it can get a better grasp on the new government's capabilities and intentions.

The United States

Central Asia has always been an enticing region for US expansion because it provides access to a region that was closed from Western influence for decades under the Soviet Union. For this reason, the US maintained a marginal interest in the states of Central Asia since 1991. However, since the events of September 11th, its interest in the region has grown exponentially. Since the glaring reminder that terrorists can still operate freely in some areas of the world, the US has attempted to cooperate with the Central Asian states that may be most susceptible to extremist influence. Although both military cooperation and supply routes are key features in the attempts at bilateral cooperation, the United States' goals extend beyond simple military presence. The US maintains an overall counterterrorism effort in the region to help eradicate any enemy freedom of movement and terrorist activities, and it is also working on developing the production and transportation of Caspian oil and gas reserves throughout the region (The NATO Archive: Russia and Central Asia 2005).

Although the US has many goals in Central Asia as a whole, its primary interest in Kyrgyzstan revolves around Manas Transit Center. After the war began in Afghanistan, the US realized it needed regional allies to support and help supply the war effort. Kyrgyzstan proved to be an ideal ally because it had accessible terrain in the relatively mountainous region, a functioning airstrip, and was more willing to cooperate with the US than some of the neighboring countries. Realizing the economic gains that could be had, President Akayev agreed to allow the US to establish Manas Airbase for a starting rent of \$2 million a year and various US investments in Kyrgyzstan's infrastructure and industries (Ibbotson and Lovell-Hoare 2010).

When President Bakiyev rose to power, he continued to honor the US contract for Manas Airbase; however, as his powerbase solidified, he became less reserved. He viewed Manas Airbase as a tool to extract concessions from both Russia and the US, and used it to his

advantage. In 2009, he announced the closure of Manas Airbase after Russia offered him a substantial amount of money and aid. This announcement had the United States scrambling to either find alternate supply routes into Afghanistan or change Bakiyev's mind (Kyrgyzstan: Bakiyev formally closes Manas Air Base 2009). Although the US claims the closure of Manas would not have significantly affected the war effort, there is no doubt that the supply lines through Kyrgyzstan are heavily relied upon. The U.S. Air Force stated in 2009 that "Manas airbase currently serves as the premier air mobility hub for the International Security Assistance Force and coalition military forces operating in Afghanistan" and the loss of the logistics center would have a negative impact the supply chain (Nichol, Kyrgyzstan's closure of the Manas Airbase: context and implications 2009).

In order to encourage President Bakiyev to overturn his decision, the US brokered a deal with the government that incorporated a rent increase to \$60 million a year and an additional \$117 million for domestic projects. In other words, if the US paid enough, changed the name to Manas Transit Center, and handed over security for the airport to Kyrgyz forces, it could maintain its presence in the country and its supply lines would not be hampered (Ibbotson and Lovell-Hoare 2010). This decision caused Russia much distress, but the US interests in the region were secured.

The coup and rise to power of a new government has once again altered the future of US interests in Kyrgyzstan. The US was somewhat hesitant to support this new, purportedly Russian-backed, Kyrgyz government, but also did not recognize the coup as strictly anti-American or a Russian conspiracy. Instead, the US provided more than \$200, 000 worth of medical supplies to help the wounded Kyrgyz people and stated its willingness to provide assistance in the future. Although President Otunbayeva made it clear that an investigation into

alleged corruption charges involving commercial supplies to the airbase will be investigated, she renewed the lease for another year. Additionally, the US has had top-level meetings with Russian leadership, and, for now, the future of Manas Transit Center seems stable (Nichol, The April 2010 coup in Kyrgyzstan and its aftermath: context and implications for U.S. interests 2010). As the new government continues to establish itself and confirm its domestic and international policies, a clearer picture of the future stability of US interests in Kyrgyzstan will become apparent.

IV. Research Design

Complex predictive problems, such as the future of the US lease on Manas Transit Center, require a structured analytical technique to assist the user in assessing the scenario. As problems become increasingly complex, it is easier for the analyst to make simple analytical errors that would be avoided if they applied a rigorous analytical method; however, even simple every-day problems can cause difficulties for the human mind to accurately assess. As Morgan D. Jones explained in his book: “all of us regularly make mistakes of judgment based on faulty analysis...[and] while some of these errors can be blamed on a lack of knowledge or education, most occur because of the way our minds work” (Jones 1998).

This study is a predictive assessment about a country that currently has an unstable government, and whose actions affect multiple national actors. The importance of an accurate prediction in these circumstances made the application of a structured analytical technique necessary. For a study that had a limited number of actors with few courses of action available to each, the Lockwood Analytical Method for Prediction (LAMP) is the most effective analytical tool to apply. It is specialized for limited predictive scenarios, and gives the analyst a powerful

and effective method of organizing the available information, and weighing it against the individual actors' perceptions, in order to arrive at multiple likely alternate futures. It is by no means infallible, but it allows the analyst to avoid many common mental fallacies that often occur when considering a wealth of data (Lockwood 2010).

There are 12 steps to analysis using the LAMP and they are listed and summarized below:

1. Define the issue for which you are trying to determine the most likely future.

In this step, the analyst must determine a specific predictive issue that is worth studying and define it in a way that will limit the analysis to only the most important issues.

2. Specify the national "actors" involved.

In this step, the analyst determines the number of parties that have a direct influence on the issue. These actors are often nation-states, but they can also be non-state actors or other influential organizations. The analyst must be very specific about the actors and make sure that they are limited to only the few that most affect the issue.

3. Perform an in-depth study of how each national actor perceives the issue in question.

In this step, the analyst must conduct meticulous historical research to gain an in-depth understanding of the mentality and reasoning behind the actions of each actor in order for them to accurately assess what actions the country will likely take in the future.

4. Specify all possible courses of action for each actor.

In this step, the analyst must list all possible courses of action that each actor could take in the future, even if it seems relatively unlikely that they may do a certain one.

5. Determine the major scenarios within which you compare the alternate futures.

In this step, the analyst must decide on the major assumptions which affect the actions of all actors involved in a problem, and develop multiple scenarios that could occur based on those assumptions.

6. Calculate the total number of permutations of possible alternate futures for each scenario.

In this step, the analyst calculates all of the alternate futures possible in each scenario using the formula $x^y = z$, where x is the number of courses of action available to each actor, y is the number of actors involved, and z is the total number of futures.

7. Perform a pairwise comparison of all alternate futures within the scenario to determine their relative probability.

In this step, the analyst compares each alternate future against every other future, determining which is the most likely in each pair. In other words, alternate future 1 is compared against alternate futures 2, 3, 4, etc to determine which is more likely. Then alternate future 2 is compared against alternate futures 3, 4, 5, etc to determine which is more likely. This process continues until the final set of alternate futures is compared.

8. Rank the alternate futures for each scenario from highest relative probability to the lowest based on the number of votes received.

In this step, the analyst must list the alternate futures from most likely to least likely based on the analysis and voting conducted during the pairwise comparisons in step 7.

9. Assuming each future occurs; analyze each alternate future in terms of its consequences for the issue in question.

In this step, the analyst must study the alternate futures and determine how each one would affect the situation they are trying to assess. Each future will affect the situation slightly differently and those differences must be understood and clearly explained.

10. Determine the focal events that must occur in our present in order to bring about a given alternate future.

In this step, the analyst must assess what events could occur in the present that could affect the likelihood of each alternate future and how each future would become more or less likely if that event were to occur.

11. Develop indicators for the focal events.

In this step, the analyst must develop a list of identifying events that would indicate a certain focal event was occurring, similar to the Indications and Warning process.

12. State the potential of a given alternate future to transpose into another alternate future.

In this step, the analyst must account for the free will of each actor and assess how likely and what it will take for one alternate future to change into a different one (Lockwood 2010).

The application of these 12 steps in this study will allow a more accurate assessment of the situation and of the potential actions of the actors. This study primarily utilizes secondary literature to evaluate the perceptions of the three actors involved and apply those perceptions to the assessment of the likelihood of various alternate futures. Although there are more than three parties affected by the unrest in Kyrgyzstan, the confines of the LAMP required that the actors be limited to only the most affected and the most influential to the situation. This limitation is a fault in the analysis but it will not significantly affect the overall conclusions of this specific study. The application of the LAMP in this study will help to overcome any evidentiary bias that might have otherwise arose and limit the degree that common mental fallacies, such as anchoring, affect the study. Additionally, the in-depth research into the perceptions of the actors,

which is required by the LAMP, will enable the accurate prediction of the likely reactions of the nations, minimizing the problem of mirror-imaging.

V. Analysis

As clarified in the Research Design section of this study, careful analysis of the actors, their courses of action, the scenarios within which each course of action could occur, and an assessment regarding which alternate future is most likely for each scenario is required for any application of the LAMP (Lockwood 2010). This section will detail steps 4 through 12 of the analytical method, and will attempt to estimate, through careful consideration and evaluation, which alternate futures are most likely and why.

The first step in evaluating the likelihood of the various futures is establishing the courses of action available to each actor. In the scenario being evaluated, the central question revolves around the future of Manas Transit Center and whether it will remain open or if efforts will be made to close it. These are the only two possibilities for the transit center, and they are the same for all actors involved. Kyrgyzstan, Russia, and the United States will all attempt to follow one of these two options over the coming months and years.

In the simplest terms, the courses of action available to Kyrgyzstan, Russia, and the United States regarding Manas Transit Center are:

1. Petition to keep Manas Transit Center open as a US logistics center
2. Make an effort to discontinue US operations at Manas Transit Center

Next, the major scenarios that will be used to compare the alternate futures must be determined. In this study, the scenarios encompass the potential types of government

Kyrgyzstan could develop. The government in Kyrgyzstan is still in the process of establishing itself, and future elections are planned to take place in October 2011. The ability of the political parties to consolidate their standpoints and individual powerbases after the recent parliamentary election will have a significant impact on the outcome of this scenario. Additionally, the outcome of the upcoming presidential election will affect the future of Manas Transit Center. The research question is centered on Manas, which is located in Kyrgyzstan; therefore, the political situation in Kyrgyzstan will have the most influence on the future actions of the governments involved, and should create the encompassing scene within which the futures will occur.

There are three major scenarios involved in this study:

1. The current parliamentary government, with Roza Otunbayeva as president, will stay in power and continue on their current, mainly moderate, path.
2. The current government is removed from power, either through the upcoming elections or through another coup, and a conservative government takes control of the country.
3. The current government is unable to organize and consolidate power, leaving multiple and disparate political parties all vying for power. General political turmoil will break out as the northern sections and southern regions of the country begin to split from each other.

The scene has been set and the alternate futures must now be calculated. This scenario is fairly limited, with only three actors and two courses of action available to each. The limited number of actors and courses of action help to minimize the number of possible alternate futures. Applying the formula described in the Research Design section of this study to the number of

actors and courses of action results in 8 possible alternate futures. They are the same for each of the three scenarios and are depicted in Table 1 below. The alternate futures are numbered 1-8 in the first column, followed by the courses of action available to the US, Russia, and Kyrgyzstan in the next three columns.

Table 1

Future	US	Russia	Kyrgyzstan
1	C	C	C
2	C	C	O
3	C	O	O
4	C	O	C
5	O	O	O
6	O	C	C
7	O	O	C
8	O	C	O
C = Make an attempt to close Manas Transit Center O = Attempt to keep Manas Transit Center open			

The alternate futures available in each scenario are the same, but, depending on the scenario within which they are evaluated, different alternate futures become more or less likely. In the following sections, all 8 alternate futures will be evaluated against each other within the context of each of the three scenarios, and they will be ranked according to how likely each future was deemed when conducting a pairwise comparison. To eliminate confusion, the analysis will be broken down by scenario.

Scenario 1: Current Kyrgyz Government Stays in Power

In this scenario, the current government stays in power and continues their moderate approach to international relations. The Kyrgyz government will likely take the course of action

regarding Manas Transit Center that will most benefit the country and not cause a significant amount of discord with either the US or Russia. The US and Russia will continue to push for their interests within the country, as they have over the last decade.

A pairwise comparison of each alternate future was conducted within the context of this scenario. Based on all of the background knowledge and assumptions impacting the actors, each scenario was compared against all of the others to determine which was the most likely. When comparing each pair of alternate futures against each other, the more likely future was given one vote. In this study, consisting of 8 alternate futures, a total of 28 pairwise comparisons were conducted, and a total of 28 corresponding votes were cast. This total was derived from the formula $x=[n(n-1)]/2$, where n is the number of alternate futures and x is the number of pairwise comparisons to be conducted. The results of this process are listed below in Table 2. The alternate future with the most votes is the most likely future, and all 8 futures are ranked accordingly. Each alternate future is listed in the first column; the corresponding courses of action are listed in the following three columns, followed by the total number of votes they received and the corresponding rankings. The 3 most likely are highlighted in red and will be explained below.

Table 2

Future	US	Russia	Kyrgyzstan	Total Votes	Rank
1	C	C	C	3	5
2	C	C	O	3	4
3	C	O	O	1	7
4	C	O	C	0	8
5	O	O	O	7	2
6	O	C	C	4	3
7	O	O	C	3	6
8	O	C	O	7	1

C = Make an attempt to close Manas Transit Center O = Attempt to keep Manas Transit Center open
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Alternate future 8: The US attempts to keep Manas Transit Center open, Russia attempts to persuade Kyrgyzstan to close it, and Kyrgyzstan decides to keep it open.

This future received 7 votes, and is the most likely in this scenario because the actions are similar to those occurring in the present. The United States is still involved in an intense conflict in Afghanistan, and is heavily reliant on the supplies that transit through Manas. Although it is working on alternate supply routes, these alternate routes are not yet established nor do they offer the same geographic benefits as Kyrgyzstan. The US will continue to try to persuade the Kyrgyz government to allow it the use of Manas Transit Center for the foreseeable future. Unlike the US, Russia will continue to try and pressure the new government to close Manas Transit Center. Russia is wary of US influence near its borders, and will act much as it did in 2009 when the country tried to get President Bakiyev to close the transit center.

Manas Transit Center is located on Kyrgyz soil, and the country's most likely course of action has the most impact on the future of Manas. While Russia can merely influence the continuation or closure of Manas, and the US can close it but cannot keep it open if needed, Kyrgyzstan can take either course of action, as it sees fit. If the current government remains in power, it will likely continue its present course of action and continue to allow the US to rent the airstrip. The Kyrgyz government recognizes that Manas Transit Center provides vast economic benefits to the country, and it will continue to want to benefit from the rent agreements and other aid investments the US has made. Although the country has shown its support for Russia, the government acknowledges that it can maintain relations with Russia without alienating the West. Although this scenario does not appease Russia, and it will still likely attempt ploys to convince

Kyrgyzstan to close the airstrip, it satisfies the desires of the other national actors involved who have a more direct influence on the fate of the transit center.

Alternate future 5: All three actors allow Manas Transit Center to remain open.

Similar to alternate future 8, this future also received 7 votes. Although they received the same number of votes, a comparison between the two alternate futures makes alternate future 5 less likely than alternate future 8. In this future, the United States still takes its most likely course of action by attempting to keep Manas open. Moreover, the Kyrgyz government allows the airstrip to stay open for the benefits that were discussed above. However, instead of attempting to persuade Kyrgyzstan to close the transit center, in this future, Russia allows the base to stay open and makes no attempt to close it.

This Russian course of action is still a possible maneuver for it in this scenario. The government of Kyrgyzstan is still new and is currently attempting to appease many of the countries with which it has international relations. In the near term, Russia will possibly be willing to maintain the current status of Manas Transit Center in order to establish its relationship and powerbase with the new government before it tries to bend the country to its will. Russia's primary concern revolves around permanent or growing Western influence in the region, and as long as Kyrgyzstan makes no attempt to make the US lease permanent or allow them additional bases in the country, then Russia will maintain its silence. As time goes on and each government becomes more secure in its role in the region, then Russia's stance will likely change and it will begin to apply more pressure on Kyrgyzstan to reduce the US influence in the country.

Alternate future 6: The US attempts to keep Manas Transit Center open, Russia tries to persuade Kyrgyzstan to close it, and Kyrgyzstan decides to close it.

This future received only 4 votes, unlike the 7 votes received by the other two most likely futures. This future is less likely because Kyrgyzstan decides to close the base. The US will continue to try to maintain its access to the vital supply route through Manas Transit Center until the situation in Afghanistan significantly changes. Additionally, Russia will make attempts to persuade the Kyrgyz government to push the US out of the country. These two courses of action are no different than their courses of action in future 8, but Kyrgyzstan's course of action changes.

Although the current Kyrgyz government has pledged to honor the standing international agreements that were established before the April coup, the agreement for the lease on Manas was only renewed for one year. Roza Otunbayeva made it clear that some of the civilian contracts signed under President Bakiyev were probably corrupt, and the government is currently investigating them. If they turn out to be invalid, the government and citizens of Kyrgyzstan may lose faith in the US presence in their country, and will want to deny any lease renewal of the transit center. Additionally, the new government has already made their desire to establish closer ties with Russia clear by asking it for military and economic support. If the new government feels that establishing closer ties with the most powerful country near its border is worth losing any benefits that Western presence provides, then it will be encouraged by Russia's efforts to convince the country to close the base and will work toward that goal. By taking this course of action, Kyrgyzstan will lose significant economic and humanitarian support from the West, but it may feel the benefits it gains from Russia outweigh the costs, making future 6 still a viable outcome.

Scenario 2: A Conservative Government Takes Power

In this scenario, the current moderate government loses power. This could occur due to various reasons. The two most likely are: they lose in the upcoming October presidential elections, or the new government is not stable enough to maintain power and gets pushed out by conservative factions in parliament. Either way, it will leave Kyrgyzstan with a conservative ruling party and the possibility of returning to an autocratic state. This will modify the actions of the Kyrgyz government on the world stage, and will change the likelihood of various alternate futures.

A pairwise comparison was once again conducted with all 8 possible alternate futures, and they were voted upon according to which future was more likely within this scenario. Similar to Table 2, the results are displayed and ranked in Table 3 below.

Table 3

Future	US	Russia	Kyrgyzstan	Total Vote	Rank
1	C	C	C	4	4
2	C	C	O	2	6
3	C	O	O	1	7
4	C	O	C	0	8
5	O	O	O	5	3
6	O	C	C	7	1
7	O	O	C	3	5
8	O	C	O	6	2
C = Make an attempt to close Manas Transit Center O = Attempt to keep Manas Transit Center open					

Alternate future 6: The US attempts to keep Manas Transit Center open, Russia works to persuade Kyrgyzstan to close it, and Kyrgyzstan decides to close it.

This future received 7 votes, making it the most likely in this scenario. In scenario 1, alternate future 6 was only third most likely, but with a conservative government in power, it

becomes much more relevant. The US will still desire to maintain access to the valuable supply line, and will attempt to work out a deal to preserve its access to Manas Transit Center with the new government. Russia will see an opportunity to increase its influence with a government that may be more ideologically aligned with its ruling style and attempt to persuade Kyrgyzstan to discontinue the US lease on the airstrip. These two courses of action did not drastically change from scenario 1, but a conservative government as the decision maker in Kyrgyzstan will significantly alter the decisions of the country regarding Manas Transit Center.

Whether the new government turns into a highly conservative parliamentary government or more of an autocratic system, its decision making process regarding the airstrip will remain fairly constant. The government will likely want to consolidate power in the region to increase its own influence within Central Asia; therefore, it will be more likely to align itself with Russia and Russia's interests than with the US. Moreover, Russia's more conservative approach to governance and leadership will probably make it easier for a relationship to grow between the two conservative governments, and it will increase the amount of influence Russia has over the decisions made by Kyrgyzstan. Although it would be a setback to the supply lines leading into Afghanistan, the US would not many options available to it to change the situation besides attempt to offer more money and aid once Kyrgyzstan made its decision. Instead, it would be forced to explore alternate supply routes, temporarily affecting the ongoing operations in Afghanistan.

Alternate future 8: The US tries to keep Manas Transit Center open, Russia tries to close it, and Kyrgyzstan decides to keep it open.

This alternate future received 6 votes, which is just slightly less than alternate future 6. Alternate future 8 was the most likely alternate future in scenario 1, but having a conservative

government in power in Kyrgyzstan changes its most probable course of action. In this future, the US maintains its desire to keep Manas Transit Center open and operating, and attempts to persuade Kyrgyzstan to allow it. The US government has various persuasion tools at its disposal, such as economic incentives and the promise of humanitarian aid. These tactics have proven successful with past conservative Kyrgyz governments, like the Bakiyev regime, but it would probably take a significant increase in either rent payments or other investments to convince the country to turn away from Russia and allow America to maintain access to the base.

In this scenario, Russia is also following its most probable course of action by trying to get the Kyrgyz government to close the airstrip. Unlike in alternate future 6, Kyrgyzstan does not succumb to Russia's attempts and allows the transit center to remain open. Although this may partially alienate Russia for a short time, it will not give up its attempts to reduce Western influence. In fact, Kyrgyzstan may view this future as an opportunity similar to the one President Bakiyev faced in 2009, and use the two countries' opposing interests to gain the most benefit for itself. By allowing the US to maintain a presence, the Kyrgyz government would preserve the economic benefits and political influence it was already receiving from the United States, while encouraging Russia to increase its aid and interest in the developing country.

Alternate future 5: All three countries allow Manas Transit Center to remain open

This alternate future received only 5 votes. The United States follows its most likely course of action once again. As always, it wants to maintain access to the valuable supply lines. Additionally, in this scenario, Kyrgyzstan allows Manas Transit Center to remain open. In this future, this course of action is not as unlikely for the Kyrgyz government as it was in the other most likely futures. By allowing the base to remain open, Kyrgyzstan continues to be close allies with the United States and benefit from the rent agreement and aid that is being provided.

Moreover, Russia is not pushing for the base to close in this future. Allowing the base to remain open has no negative consequences for Kyrgyzstan because it is also maintaining a positive relationship with Russia and not counteracting its goals in the region.

This future did not receive as many votes primarily because of Russia's chosen course of action. With a conservative government in power, Russia would likely try to exploit its probable desire to establish closer ties with the conservative Russian government. It would see this as an opportunity to get Kyrgyzstan to close the airstrip; however, the country does not follow that option in this case. Instead, Russia allows the base to remain open. This is still a possible course of action for Russia because its interest in the region does not lie solely with reducing Western influence. Russia understands that the conflict in Afghanistan takes a significant amount of manpower and supplies, and has no desire to get any more involved than it is already. By allowing the base to remain open, it makes it easier for the United States to take the brunt of the burden in the conflict. Additionally, Russia may not feel the immediate need to pursue such a concrete goal. The Russian government would understand the desire of the conservative Kyrgyz government to establish closer ties with Russia; therefore, its influence in the region would not be as threatened as if a more liberal government was in power, and it could afford to allow the US to maintain temporary access to the transit center.

Scenario 3: The Current Government Fails and the Country Begins to Divide

Similar to scenario 2, in this scenario, the current moderate government loses power. However, unlike scenario 2, the current parliamentary democracy loses power but no solidified powerbase takes over. Instead, multiple political factions vie for power, and the natural north/south divisions that remain an undercurrent in the county begin to reveal themselves.

Without a unifying government, the more Uzbek and clan-based south begins to split from the more European north, and a political vacuum arises with the individual powers that are attempting to take control. Specifically, the people unhappy with the current government would encourage protests, ethnic violence, and radical government reforms. Groups such as the Ata Jurt Party, the Social Democratic Party of Kyrgyzstan, the Respublica Party, and the former Bakiyev supporters would all compete against each other, leaving none of them with any true power.

A pairwise comparison was once again conducted with all 8 possible alternate futures, and they were voted upon according to which future was more likely within this scenario. Similar to the previous tables, the results are displayed and ranked in Table 4 below.

Table 4

Future	US	Russia	Kyrgyzstan	Total Votes	Rank
1	C	C	C	3	5
2	C	C	O	4	4
3	C	O	O	2	6
4	C	O	C	0	8
5	O	O	O	5	3
6	O	C	C	6	2
7	O	O	C	1	7
8	O	C	O	7	1
C = Make an attempt to close Manas Transit Center O = Attempt to keep Manas Transit Center open					

Alternate future 8: The US attempts to keep Manas Transit Center open, Russia tries to persuade Kyrgyzstan to close it, and Kyrgyzstan decides to keep it open.

This future received 7 votes. Evaluating the alternate futures in scenario 3 was slightly more difficult than in the other two scenarios because there are more variables involved.

However, even with the increased variables brought on by the highly unstable situation, alternate future 8 was the most likely future, just as it was in scenario 1. Unlike in scenario 1, the reasons behind the actors' chosen courses of action are different. In this future, the US works to keep Manas Transit Center open. Although political turmoil has taken over Kyrgyzstan, the impetus behind the US desire to maintain access to Manas has not changed and neither has its most likely course of action. The same is true for Russia. In fact, Russia has an even greater desire to push any Western influence out of the county because the political chaos opens an opportunity for Russia to take a more direct role in one of the states in Central Asia. Although Russia has not been eager to get heavily involved in domestic unrest in the region, the risk to the security of its energy interests located there would probably be enough of an incentive for it to take a more direct role.

Kyrgyzstan's chosen course of action is slightly more complicated. Without a central government to decide the fate of the transit center, it becomes more debatable as to what the future will hold. As the northern sections of the country begin to split from the southern, each region would have a semblance of a government that controlled that section. In this case, the fate of Manas would probably be decided by those in power in the north. In such an unstable situation, the party that rises to power would realize it needed a constant source of capital to have the economic means it would need to truly consolidate power. The northern power would view Manas as not only a source of income, but a way to align itself with the power and influence the US can bring to a conflict, and would allow the US to continue using the airbase. Therefore, the need to consolidate power and guarantee good relations with a powerful country makes this the most likely course of action for Kyrgyzstan.

Alternate future 6: The US attempts to keep Manas Transit Center open, Russia tries to persuade Kyrgyzstan to close it, and Kyrgyzstan decides to close it.

This alternate future received 6 votes. It is nearly as likely as alternate future 8, but Kyrgyzstan's choice changes. As always, the US continues to attempt to maintain access to the airbase. Even with the political chaos, the logistics center is important enough to fight to continue shipping supplies along that route. Although operations may be somewhat impacted, the vital military cargo would still be able to transit through the country. Russia, once again seeing an opportunity to exploit the chaos in Kyrgyzstan, would try to encourage the country to close Manas Transit Center for the same reasons it did in alternate future 8.

The main difference in this alternate future is that Kyrgyzstan decides to close the transit center. Similar to alternate future 8, the powers in the north would most likely control the fate of the airbase. Unlike alternate future 8, it would decide to align itself more closely with Russia, instead of the United States. In order to attempt to gain favor with Russia and encourage its military and economic support in their conflict with the south, the northern powers would succumb to Russia's desire to close the airstrip and push the US presence out of the country. The north could very easily view Russia as the predominant power in the region, and its location much closer to the Kyrgyz border compared to the US could make it a more enticing ally. This move would likely alienate support from the US, but they would see the benefits gained in the near term from Russian support as more important than any potential economic or political cost that would result from losing the US as an ally.

Alternate future 5: All three countries allow Manas Transit Center to remain open.

This alternate future received 5 votes. In this future, the US tries to keep its access to the logistics center for the same reasons listed in alternate futures 8 and 6 of this scenario. Although

the country has other supply lines available to it, the supply line through Kyrgyzstan is established, fairly secure, and offers the option to ship certain types of cargo, such as lethal supplies, that aren't as easily available along other supply routes. Losing that supply line would negatively impact operations in Afghanistan, and the US will attempt to maintain it if it is reasonable to do so. Kyrgyzstan also agrees to allow the US to remain at Manas Transit Center. Its reasons are basically the same as those listed in alternate future 8. Additionally, it would not have Russia pressuring it to close the transit center, so there would be no obvious disadvantage for the powers in the north to close it.

Unlike the previous two, in this future, Russia decides to allow Manas Transit Center to remain open. This would most likely occur due to Russia's established desire to stay out of domestic conflicts. If the situation in Kyrgyzstan dissolved into civil war but did not significantly threaten Russia's energy interests in Central Asia, the country may not want to entangle itself in what it viewed to be a domestic conflict. Although it wants to be the primary power in the region, Russia is reluctant to commit any kind of military force to these types of conflicts. Russia made this clear when the Otunbayeva regime asked for its assistance during the ethnic violence after the April coup and it refused to provide any direct military support. In order to prevent it from becoming entangled in the conflict or indebted to either side of the splitting country, Russia would take an entirely hands off approach and not try to pressure the warring parties to diminish US presence by closing Manas. This future is less likely because Russia would probably want to exploit the situation for its own purposes, but it is still a very plausible scenario.

Focal Events, Indicators, and Transposition

Alternate futures 5, 6 and 8 are the top three most likely futures for the fate of Manas Transit Center in Kyrgyzstan. In all three scenarios that were evaluated, those alternate futures were voted as the top three each time, making them not only the most likely in each scenario, but also the most likely overall. However, the futures were not in the same order each time because the outside influences of each scenario slightly altered the probability of each one occurring. In a limited and interconnected national security problem such as this, the alternate futures are very closely related, often differing by only a single change in course of action for one of the actors. This impacts the probability of each alternate future because they can easily transpose into a different future if certain key events take place.

These key events, known as focal events, and their associated indicators, must be studied in order to evaluate the global events that could change the likelihood of each future occurring. Additionally, if some of these events take place, they could not only change the likelihood of the future occurring, but alter the future in such a way that it actually mutates into one of the other alternate futures. This phenomenon is called transposition, and it is a key step in the LAMP. The potential of an alternate future to transpose into another alternate future helps the analyst account for any unexpected occurrences that result from the free will of each actor (Lockwood 2010).

In the following section, the four focal events with the most impact on the situation will be studied, and their affect on each of the three most likely futures will be explained.

Focal Event: Vladimir Putin reclaims the Russian presidency in the 2012 elections.

Indicators:

- Vladimir Putin begins to distance himself from the Dmitri Medvedev regime through independent policies as the prime minister

- Putin decides to compete against Medvedev for the 2012 presidential elections
- The United Russia party selects Putin as its primary candidate
- The opposition parties in Russia make no significant attempt to claim status or power, or try to unseat United Russia from their position of power

This focal event would most significantly impact alternate future 5. In alternate future 5, all three actors allow Manas Transit Center to remain open. Specifically, Russia does not try to persuade the Kyrgyz government to close the airbase and push the US influence out of the region. If Putin is elected as president, it is less likely that Russia would follow that course of action. When compared to Putin's term as president, President Medvedev has proven himself to be more liberal in foreign policy matters; therefore, probably more willing to let Manas stay open for a period of time until it truly begins to impact Russian interests in Central Asia. If the more conservative Putin becomes president, Russian foreign policy decisions will also likely become more conservative. Putin would probably put more emphasis on pushing the Western presence out of his sphere of influence, and would therefore put more pressure on Kyrgyzstan to close Manas Transit Center.

If this focal event occurs, alternate future 5 would become less likely, and would encourage a change in Russia's course of action. In this case, alternate future 5 would transpose into alternate future 6 or 8. Whether alternate future 6 or 8 were more likely to occur depends on the situation in Kyrgyzstan. After this focal event takes place and increased pressure is put on Kyrgyzstan to close the transit center, the government of Kyrgyzstan would likely succumb to the powerful regional influence of Russia over the more distant influence of the US, and alternate future 5 would eventually become alternate future 6.

Focal Event: The Republicans win the presidency in the 2012 presidential elections in the US.

Indicators:

- The interim congressional elections give the Republican's a majority, showing a change in public sentiment
- President Obama's approval ratings continue to drop
- The Democratic party pushes through legislation with which the American public does not agree
- The Republican party chooses a strong presidential candidate, with a strong-base of support, and pairs him or her with a reliable Vice President to create a strong ticket

Although this is a focal event involving the future situation in the US, it actually has the most impact on Russian courses of action. The primary course of action for the United States in all three most likely alternate futures will not change, even if a different party comes to power. If this focal event occurs, the Republican Party will probably not significantly alter the current pace of war-fighting in Afghanistan. They will still need Manas Transit Center to move supplies into the theater of operations, and will continue to push for Manas to remain open. If anything, they may slightly increase the operations tempo and begin to favor kinetic operations over information operations, which will also increase its reliance on the Kyrgyzstan supply route.

Although this focal event will not change the US course of action, it will significantly impact US relations with Russia and how Russia approaches the existence of Western influence in Central Asia. Since the Democrats came to power in 2008, the US has sought a reset in US/Russian relations and Russia has reacted in-kind. Since this reset, Russia has been more cooperative on the world stage, agreeing to international policies and sanctions that it previously

resisted. Russia associates these more open and friendly relations with the democratic regime, and if the Republicans come to power in 2012, it will likely be increasingly wary of the new regime. Whether it actually occurs or not, Russia will expect a more stringent approach to US foreign policy, and the country will attempt to secure its interests before the new policies in the US can affect those interests abroad. Due to the expectations of US policy, Russia will increase the pressure on Kyrgyzstan to end the US lease and close Manas Transit Center. The country will want to solidify its presence in Central Asia, and will view pushing the US out as a means to that end.

This focal event will most significantly affect alternate future 5 because it will change Russia's most likely course of action. Russia will change from allowing Manas Transit Center to remain open, to pressuring Kyrgyzstan to close it. This will transpose alternate future 5 into either alternate future 6 or alternate future 8. Similar to the previous focal event, it is more likely that alternate future 5 will transpose into alternate future 6 because the Kyrgyz government will want to maintain a strong relationship with the powerful ally that is located closer to its border.

Focal Event: The US drawdown of forces in Afghanistan occurs more quickly than expected.

Indicators:

- NATO and Coalition forces experience higher than expected successes in the war effort
- The rate of reconciliation of former Taliban members increases
- The Government of Afghanistan agrees on a path towards peace and drawdown of violence with Taliban Senior Leadership
- Aggressive Pakistani attacks on the Taliban occur in the border regions, and the government institutes a general crackdown on Taliban facilitation throughout Pakistan

The pace of conflict in Afghanistan is a key indicator of the strength of US interests in Manas Transit Center. Manas is a key logistics hub for supplies making their way to Afghanistan. If the intensity of the war begins to decrease, the need for supplies will also decrease, and the need for the US to maintain its lease on Manas Transit Center will decline rapidly. This significantly impacts the likely course of action for the US. Although it will continue to try to keep Manas open while the war is still ongoing, once the drawdown is complete, the US will not fight as hard to maintain its lease. If Russia continues to pressure Kyrgyzstan to close the airstrip, the US may not be willing to pay the increases in rent and economic aid Kyrgyzstan would likely want for the US to renew its lease. Instead, the alternate supply routes would be sufficient enough to transit the required supplies to Afghanistan, and the US could begin to rely on them instead.

Additionally, if Russia saw a concrete drawdown in US forces, it would not be as concerned with the US presence in Kyrgyzstan. The country would realize that the US was beginning to move out of its sphere of influence and would not see as much of a need to pressure Kyrgyzstan. This would make Russia's standard course of action, which involves applying pressure to the Kyrgyz government to close Manas, less likely.

This change will have the most impact on alternate futures 6 and 8. In alternate future 6, Russia pressures Kyrgyzstan to close Manas, and Kyrgyzstan agrees. If Russia no longer applies that pressure, Kyrgyzstan will want to benefit from the economic assistance Manas provides for as long as possible, and will want to keep the airbase open. This would result in alternate future 6 transposing into alternate future 5. A similar transposition happens with alternate future 8. Although Russia still pressures Kyrgyzstan to close the logistics center in alternate future 8, Kyrgyzstan decides to keep it open. In this scenario, only Russia's course of action changes

instead of both Russia's and Kyrgyzstan's, making the transposition of alternate future 8 into alternate future 5 more likely than that of alternate future 6.

Focal Event: Ethnic unrest sparks violence in southern Kyrgyzstan, resulting in the mobilization of the Kyrgyz military to quell the violence.

Indicators:

- The Kyrgyz government does not include any Uzbek representative in the parliament
- The Uzbek population in the south is given worse pay for the same jobs as the ethnic Kyrgyz population
- The Uzbek population is racially discriminated against in the job market
- There is an increase in Kyrgyz national demonstrations, indicating a rise in the Kyrgyz nationalistic spirit

All of the previous focal events have most significantly affected the external influences on Kyrgyzstan, but this focal event has the most affect on Kyrgyzstan's most likely course of action. Ethnic unrest in the country will not have any major impact on the United States' or Russia's actions regarding Manas Transit Center. The US will still desire to maintain its lease on the airbase, and Russia will still want to diminish Western influence in Central Asia. However, if ethnic unrest erupts in Kyrgyzstan, it will significantly impact how the Kyrgyz government responds. It will need to send its military and security forces to the southern regions of the country to try to contain and suppress the violence. Since 2009, Kyrgyz security forces have been providing the airbase security for Manas. The increase in violence will require the government to pull its security forces away from Manas and move them to the areas that have a more direct impact on their own country, such as the government buildings in Bishkek and the city of Osh.

This focal event has the most impact on alternate futures 5 and 8. Part of the agreement for the US to renew its lease on Manas in 2009 required that Kyrgyzstan provide the security for the airstrip. The removal of the Kyrgyz security forces from Manas will force the Kyrgyz government to close the airstrip until those security forces can return. This closure would be temporary, but it would transpose both alternate future 5 and alternate future 8 into alternate future 6. In alternate future 6, the US and Russia follow their most likely courses of action, but Kyrgyzstan decides to close Manas Transit Center. In this scenario, internal instead of external pressures are forcing the closure, but it will still occur. However, this is likely only a temporary transposition. Once the ethnic unrest settles again, the Kyrgyz government will return the security forces to Manas, thereby reopening the logistics hub, and the original alternate future again becomes valid.

VI. Conclusion

The question over the future of Manas Transit Center has yet to be decided. At this point in time, the Otunbayeva government is willing to allow the logistics hub to stay open. Although she has publically aligned the new government with Russia, she is attempting to create a stable government with various international connections. The attempts to increase Kyrgyz international alliances, and the need for continued economic support to help the creation of a new governmental system, will benefit US interests in the region. In the foreseeable future, the Kyrgyz government will likely allow the US to maintain its lease on the airstrip. However, over the next few years, various internal and external variables could easily affect the situation and cause a reversal of current decisions.

The US should continue to vigilantly monitor the situation in Kyrgyzstan. Manas Transit Center is vital to current operations in Afghanistan, and losing the supply route would affect the ability to resupply ongoing combat operations. In order to limit any impacts on the current conflict, the US should work with the new Kyrgyz government to maintain strong ties. The government is currently investigating charges of corruption involving Manas Transit Center and agreements that were established under the Bakiyev regime. Depending on the outcome of these investigations, the Kyrgyz government may demand new contracts or a renewed lease agreement. If the US continues to maintain ties with the country, it will be in a more secure bargaining position with the new government, and it will be better able to protect its future access to the logistics hub.

The next step in assessing this issue involves a more in-depth study of the internal influences pressuring the major actors of the new parliamentary Kyrgyz government. Gaining a better understanding of their motivations will provide a more accurate assessment of how they will act in the future. Additionally, a thorough investigation of the pace of conflict in Afghanistan will offer a better understanding of the true length of time that the US will be heavily involved in the war. If the war begins to draw down rapidly, US interests in Kyrgyzstan will significantly drop, and it will alter the policy taken in the region. This is a highly complicated situation with many actors and variables, and many of these variables are beyond the scope of this study. This study attempted to clarify the influences of Russia, Kyrgyzstan, and the United States on the future of Manas Transit Center, and estimate what the most likely outcome will be of this volatile situation. As Abraham Lincoln said, “the best thing about the future is that it comes one day at a time” and the US must continue to monitor the situation and act accordingly (Thinkexist 2010).

VII. References

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