

# NONPROLIFERATION AND KAZAKSTANI SECURITY POLICY

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Nonproliferation has played an important role in Kazakstani security policy since the country gained independence following the collapse of the Soviet Union. In the first years following independence, as Kazakstan began to define its priorities and national interests, Kazakstani security policy was dominated by issues related to the former Soviet nuclear weapons located on its territory. Kazakstan first emerged as an actor on the international stage through its participation in international agreements that provided for the removal of these weapons, such as the 1992 Lisbon Protocol to the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START I) and the 1968 Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). Since the last of these nuclear weapons was removed from Kazakstan in April 1995, Kazakstani foreign policy has entered a new phase. In contrast to the years just after independence, when Kazakstani security policy was largely “passive” and driven by the need to respond to problems inherited from the Soviet Union, the leadership of the country is now setting its own priorities and defining its own national interests.

Nonproliferation issues, such as efforts to establish a regional nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia and to cope with the legacy of Soviet nuclear testing, are important elements of Kazakstan’s new security policy. As the site of nearly 500 nuclear tests during the Cold

War, Kazakstan made a major contribution to the global nonproliferation regime by signing the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) in September 1996. Nevertheless, nonproliferation has been joined by other emerging security issues, such as those related to the division of the Caspian Sea basin and its rich mineral resources. At this stage, the diverse geopolitical vectors at play in Central Asia are becoming more fully interconnected; and the policies, roles, and interests of the great powers and principal foreign actors struggling for influence in the region are becoming increasingly visible. As competition for influence in the region has increased, Kazakstan’s efforts to strike a balance among the various countries involved have intensified. However, given its modest capabilities and influence, Kazakstan has limited political weight in the region.

This report discusses current Kazakstani nonproliferation policy within the broader context of Kazakstan’s overall national security concerns. It first examines nonproliferation, specifically ongoing efforts to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia. This report also examines the security implications of Kazakstan’s civilian nuclear program. It then outlines the development of Kazakstan’s broader security policy, looking at Kazakstani security ties with the United States, China, the Asian region, Russia and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), and Central Asia. The report

concludes with some general observations about future directions in Kazakstani security policy.

### **NONPROLIFERATION ISSUES IN KAZAKSTANI SECURITY POLICY**

Despite the 1995 removal of the last former Soviet nuclear weapon from Kazakstan, nonproliferation issues remain an important aspect of the country's security policy. Kazakstan's support for the CTBT, which it signed on September 30, 1996, was a significant step that strengthened the global nonproliferation regime. It also further cemented Kazakstan's non-nuclear status.

The initiative aimed at creating a Central Asian nuclear-weapon-free zone (CANWFZ) has made significant recent progress and is an important aspect of Kazakstan's security policy. The CANWFZ would be an addition to the four existing regional NWFZs, located in Latin America, the South Pacific, Southeast Asia, and Africa. This initiative touches upon both Kazakstan's international security obligations as well as its regional security policy, because it would influence the geopolitical situation in Asia and the entire security structure of Eurasia. In fact, the establishment of a CANWFZ would affect Kazakstan's relations with its Central Asian neighbors—especially Uzbekistan, which is a strong advocate of the zone—as well as its relations with Russia, China, and countries in South Asia and the Middle East.

Initially, the idea to create a CANWFZ came from Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. Both states independently raised the issue at international fora—Uzbekistan at the 48th session of the U.N. General Assembly in 1993, Kyrgyzstan at the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference. Uzbekistan reiterated its call for a CANWFZ at the Lisbon summit of the Organization on Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in 1996. These initiatives took place at a time when Kazakstan was preoccupied with the removal from its territory of former Soviet nuclear weapons. It should be noted that by accomplishing this objective, Kazakstan effectively freed the entire territory of Central Asia from nuclear weapons. Nevertheless, Kazakstan regarded the CANWFZ idea coolly prior to 1996. This position apparently was the result of intra-regional competition between Almaty and Tashkent regarding the initiation of new international security measures. However, once Kazakstan had secured Uzbekistan's complete support of its own initiatives in the security sphere, especially the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia

(CICA), it threw its active support behind the idea of a CANWFZ in the region, a concept that had begun to be linked with Uzbek President Islam Karimov.

The main internationally recognized condition for creating a NWFZ is the voluntary consent and participation of all states in the region. The five Central Asian states—Kazakstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan—are primarily concerned with the ecological security of Central Asia, and demonstrated their coordination by signing the Almaty Declaration in February 1997 at a Central Asian environmental summit dealing with the Aral Sea. In the Almaty Declaration, all five of the Central Asian presidents supported the idea of establishing a CANWFZ. The declaration demonstrated that the Central Asian states could, with firm political will, work together on problems that are vital to the security of the region: moving toward the establishment of a CANWFZ, building future oil and gas pipelines, and saving the Aral Sea. The regional collaboration fostered while creating a CANWFZ may spill over and strengthen collaboration in other areas. As an example, the unanimity and political cohesion displayed in the Almaty Declaration were put to work again later in 1997 when the Afghan conflict threatened to spill over into Central Asia. All of the states in the region, while refusing to recognize the Taliban regime, acknowledged the necessity of peaceful dialogue and the creation of a coalition government in Kabul.

In pursuing its nonproliferation policy, Kazakstan has conducted a series of major activities in recent years that may affect the prospects for the establishment of a CANWFZ. All of these activities reflect Kazakstan's special position relative to the other republics of the region and the former Soviet nuclear program. In June 1997, at a special session of the U.N. General Assembly, Kazakstani President Nursultan Nazarbaev stated that "the nuclear powers must carry unconditional responsibility for the consequences of nuclear testing." His statement raised the question of compensation for the nuclear tests that were conducted in and around the territory of the former Soviet nuclear test site at Semipalatinsk in Kazakstan. Considering the painful context of the issue—Kazakstan had begun raising it even before the dissolution of the Soviet Union, and had tried unsuccessfully to link it to the implementation of START I—one cannot rule out the possibility that the problem of compensation may reappear in the context of CANWFZ negotiations.

In April 1997, Kazakstan adopted a "Law on the Use of Atomic Energy." In September and October of the same year, it conducted a series of conferences and seminars on nuclear problems, one of which took place in Kurchatov, the main city located near the Semipalatinsk test site. These conferences were facilitated by the support of U.N. General Secretary Kofi Annan, who recognized the significance of the Almaty Declaration for the creation of a CANWFZ. However, real difficulties exist in the area of fissile materials control, which must be ensured in order for a CANWFZ to be effective. At a September 1997 academic conference in Almaty, for example, some argued that it would be extremely difficult to introduce International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards on installations at Semipalatinsk, considering the nature of its infrastructure. The conference also illuminated the main problem that is of concern to both central and regional government authorities in Kazakstan: the disposal and/or safe storage of the huge quantities of radioactive waste remaining in the republic as a result of both military and civilian nuclear activities in Kazakstan during the Soviet era.

Two other factors are also likely to influence Kazakstani policy toward the creation of a CANWFZ. The first involves the republic's participation in an international program on the creation of a Tokamak fusion research facility. When the Almaty Declaration was being prepared, discussions were simultaneously being conducted in Almaty within the framework of a representative international seminar on the theoretical aspects of this program. The possibility of conducting sub-critical nuclear experiments for scientific purposes at Semipalatinsk was discussed at length. These initiatives would seem to run counter to the spirit of creating a CANWFZ, unless the Semipalatinsk test site were to receive a special status within the zone.

The second factor is related to energy. In several regions, Kazakstan continues to experience an annoying dependence on imported energy despite the country's colossal reserves of both fossil fuels and renewable energy. Natural gas is imported from Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, electric energy from Kyrgyzstan, and oil products from Russia. Crises caused by irregular deliveries from these suppliers have become an annual ritual. This situation is pushing Kazakstan to ensure its own energy independence, in part through plans for the large-scale construction of nuclear power plants. However, the realization of these projects will take time, and until

that time the energy factor will be a continuous irritant in Central Asian relations, especially Kazakstani-Uzbek relations. Any conflict over energy deliveries, of course, will not encourage the atmosphere of political understanding that is so necessary for the creation of a CANWFZ.

On the whole, the CANWFZ idea currently has favorable prospects for implementation. It is supported by the United Nations, the nuclear powers, including those that are regional neighbors—Russia and China—and also a number of Asian states. The sole potential barrier for its creation in the near term would be a sudden worsening of the political situation in the region or in an area that is in direct proximity to Central Asia.

In this regard, it is unclear what effect the recent nuclear tests nearby in India and Pakistan might have. These nuclear tests present at least three security concerns for Kazakstan. First, the Pakistani test site in the Chagai Hills region is dangerously close to the border with politically unstable Afghanistan, where civil war continues to rage. Second, both India and Pakistan have historically shown a tendency to resolve their political disagreements with one another through war. Third, if India and Pakistan should fight a war using nuclear weapons, the nearby areas of Central Asia, including Kazakstan, could be contaminated by radioactive fallout. With these concerns in mind, Kazakstan officially condemned both the Indian and Pakistani nuclear tests in statements issued by the Kazak Foreign Ministry on May 13 and 28, 1998, and called on both countries to adhere to the NPT and CTBT.

Kazakstan will support all international measures to convince India and Pakistan to end their military nuclear programs, and Almaty regards the CICA process as one possible approach to achieving a peaceful solution to the issue. Although it is an unfortunate development, the new situation created by the Indian and Pakistani tests does not appear to be an insurmountable obstacle to the negotiation of the CANWFZ, and the general political situation points toward the preservation of stability in the Central Asian region.

The CANWFZ initiative occupies an important place in Kazakstani security policy, but ultimately should be seen as only one part of Kazakstan's comprehensive nuclear policy. The zone is also an element of Kazakstan's broader Central Asian policy, allowing it to further harmonize its political relations with Uzbekistan by supporting the idea. Nevertheless, in terms of priority,

it takes a back seat to Kazakstani foreign policy initiatives like the CICA. However, in the final analysis, all of these initiatives share one common goal—the preservation of security in the region—and could become mutually supportive elements of a larger system of regional security.

In 1997, Kazakstan also signed the 1972 Soviet-American Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty, which was multilateralized through the signing of a protocol adding Kazakstan, Belarus, and Ukraine to the agreement. Adhering to the treaty corresponded to the strategic interests of Kazakstan, as it contributes to the strengthening of both global and regional security. In connection with the ABM Treaty, Kazakstan also became a participant in the Agreement on Confidence-Building Measures and the Permanent Consultative Commission. Almaty's decision to sign these agreements had a stabilizing effect on both Kazakstani-Russian and Kazakstani-U.S. relations.

### **THE SECURITY IMPLICATIONS OF KAZAKSTAN'S CIVILIAN NUCLEAR PROGRAM**

Another aspect of Kazakstan's security policy is linked to the country's civilian nuclear program. It should be noted that nuclear security in Kazakstan became hostage long ago to the difficult economic and social situation in the country. That is to say, nuclear security cannot be guaranteed by the state as it was during the Soviet era. Instead, it is determined more directly by the internal political climate. This connection was clearly illustrated by an incident in late 1997 at the Mangyshlak Atomic Energy Combine in Aktau (formerly Shevchenko). During a labor dispute provoked by the extremely difficult economic situation of the technical and engineering staff, violent actions by center personnel jeopardized the protection of the BN-350 reactor housed there. This incident had the potential to disrupt the safe operation of the plant. However, the Kazakstani government has paid little attention to this alarming signal and has continued to ignore the social consequences of its economic reforms for the nuclear complex.

Overall, both political and economic problems are currently blocking the further development of civilian nuclear power in Kazakstan. Political problems are generated by the population's fear of radiation and the activities of the environmental and anti-nuclear movements.

The severity of these political obstacles has been greatly reduced over the past several years, however. At the same time, economic obstacles have grown: who will build future nuclear power plants in Kazakstan, and how will they be financed? Politically speaking, the battle over proposals to construct a robust network of atomic power stations has been won by the "atomic lobby."<sup>1</sup> This victory was facilitated by the current political system in Kazakstan, in which the influence of local activists, non-governmental organizations, and local authorities on national decisions is extremely limited. In fact, the right to make decisions on issues like national energy policy has become the exclusive prerogative of the government. The Kazakstani population also has fallen victim to what some term the "Armenian syndrome": it is better to have a nuclear power plant than to sit in the dark due to a lack of electricity.

Nevertheless, the victory of the atomic lobby has remained controversial. The problems linked with the large-scale construction of nuclear power plants have become a strategic issue, and must be integrated into general planning for the energy and industrial development of the country during the next century. As a result, nuclear power development is linked to such issues as the development of the oil and gas complex, the struggle for "big Caspian oil," the fate of market-oriented economic reforms, and the attraction of investment in the economy. In this connection, the April 1997 law "On the Use of Atomic Energy" has great significance, as it opens up the Kazakstani atomic energy complex to foreign private investment. Russia and France have recently emerged as potential partners in Kazakstani atomic construction projects. Russian influence is unavoidable for a number of reasons. First, the Russian Ministry of Atomic Energy (Minatom) is prepared to build a power plant as compensation for Kazakstan's share of the "diluted" plutonium taken from the former Soviet nuclear warheads that were removed from the country, reducing financing problems. Second, even if Canadian, French, or U.S. firms were to agree to build nuclear power plants in Kazakstan, Russia will nonetheless be involved, given Russia's understandable interest and the likelihood that Minatom could provide more favorable pricing for any type of reactor. Overall, the interest of Russia's Minatom in Kazakstan has a dual character. On the one hand, it seeks to preserve Kazakstan, together with its industrial infrastructure, as a major source of uranium ore and enriched fuel after the year 2010, when the primary re-

serves of uranium on Russian territory will be depleted. On the other hand, Minatom would like to retain Kazakstan as a strategic market for Russian-built nuclear power plants, as it hopes to do in China, India, and Iran.

As a result Kazakstan has little room to maneuver in the development of its nuclear energy program. What room remains is limited to the Central Asian Union (CAU). Within the CAU, Kazakstan could enrich its uranium in Kyrgyz facilities (at the Kara Balta Ore Mining Combine), assuming that these facilities were refitted for this purpose, possibly with Russian technical assistance. However, all nuclear projects in Kazakstan currently remain in the shadow of the battle for "big Caspian oil." In the minds of the Kazakstani elite, this factor has already abnormally overshadowed all other economic and social issues related to the external and internal security of the country.

### **THE U.S. FACTOR IN KAZAKSTANI SECURITY POLICY**

The regional level of Kazakstani security policy is one of its most important, involving Almaty in security relationships with partners in the West, in Asia, and in the former Soviet Union. The core of Kazakstan's ties with the West is its relationship with the United States. The foundation of that relationship is the 1994 Charter on Democratic Partnership. However, this relationship is not one of equals. In 1995, the first crisis in Kazakstani-American relations occurred: Washington vigorously protested the dissolution of the Kazakstani parliament and the extension of President Nazarbaev's powers until 2000. Yet, despite these disagreements, a productive bilateral relationship was renewed at the highest levels in 1997. This change resulted from a turn in American strategy. In 1997, the United States openly declared Central Asia to be within the scope of its national interests. First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton's November 1997 visit to Central Asia—including Kazakstan—served as confirmation of this shift and indicated the level of U.S. geopolitical and commercial interest in the region. That same month, President Nazarbaev made an official visit to the United States.

The economic effect and political resonance of Nazarbaev's visit exceeded expectations. The centerpiece of the visit was the signing of an agreement on the use of Caspian oil reserves, including shelf reserves. This agreement has a duration of 40 years, with expected revenues amounting to at least \$800 billion. (Of that sum,

\$600 billion will go to Kazakstan.) The two countries also signed an economic partnership program, which serves as a continuation of the Charter on Democratic Partnership of 1994. Finally, U.S. President Bill Clinton declared Kazakstan to be a "strategic partner of the United States of America in Central Asia," while U.S. Vice President Al Gore broke established White House etiquette by emphasizing the significance of Kazakstan for the Clinton administration.

As a result of the visit, the positive side of Kazakstani-U.S. relations is clearly evident. However, these agreements could also have negative consequences for the future security of Kazakstan. Almaty, by obligating itself to support the American concept of a transport corridor between East and West and the construction of an oil pipeline through Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Turkey, has jeopardized its relationship with Iran. In so doing, Kazakstan has also diverged from its previous strategy of developing balanced relations in all areas, including the area of pipeline construction. Furthermore, the agreement on the use of oil reserves on the Caspian shelf was signed before the official determination of the shelf's legal status and the division of the waters. This could reflect negatively on Kazakstan's relationship with Moscow, which holds a different view of the Caspian's international legal status.

Looking further into the future, the agreements signed with the United States and Kazakstan's shift in policy toward Washington will unavoidably cast a shadow on Kazakstan's relationship with China. As a result, a completely false impression has been created—that the United States is turning away from cooperation with Russia and is beginning to give its preference to the southern regions of the CIS—to the Caucasus and Central Asia. If the Kazakstani leadership accepts this inaccurate perception and rejects its former strategy of a balanced foreign policy, this could have significant implications for Kazakstani security in the future.

Nevertheless, several months ago, the United States demonstrated the seriousness of its intentions in Central Asia in the most decisive manner. Within the framework of the Partnership for Peace program, military maneuvers were conducted in southern Kazakstan involving NATO forces, troops from several CIS countries, and the Central Asian Battalion (Centrazbat, consisting of troops from Kazakstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan). However, U.S. military forces greatly outnumbered all others. In fact, this training represented the first maneu-

vers by U.S. rapid-deployment forces in Central Asia. The exercises indicated that, in the event of a crisis in the region, these troops could be deployed within 24 hours and could then be effectively used in conjunction with the Centrazbat. Current plans call for similar exercises to be held again in 1998. This development also means that: 1) the forces of the United States or North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) could be deployed "behind the back" of Russia, which considers the region to be its rear guard; and 2) these troops will operate in direct proximity to the Chinese border. Clearly, joint NATO-Centrazbat training serves as a distinct signal, but to whom? The most farsighted analysts agree that this was a signal not to Russia, but to China.

### **KAZAKSTANI-CHINESE SECURITY TIES**

To the East, Kazakstan's relations with China have witnessed a number of dramatic events in the past year. First, President Nazarbaev made an extended unofficial visit to China in February 1997, which coincided with both major ethnic disturbances in Xinjiang province (along the Kazakstani border) and the death of Deng Xiaoping. Either of these developments could have resulted in serious adjustments of Beijing's policies. Second, Kazakstan signed an agreement with Russia, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and China providing for the reduction of armed forces along the former Soviet-Chinese border. Third, the visit to Almaty of Chinese Premier Li Peng in September 1997 featured the signing of a packet of agreements on the construction of an oil pipeline from western Kazakstan to China, as well as agreements totaling \$9.5 billion on developing Caspian oil fields. These agreements signal that China's presence in the region will become an economic and political reality in the next few years.

Already Kazakstan has undertaken certain political obligations in relation to Beijing. Under the April 1997 agreement, Almaty will reduce its armed forces along its border with China, while China retains substantial militarized police units in Xinjiang province to combat Uighur separatists. In addition, Almaty has pledged to expand the flow of cargo from China into Kazakstan and to denounce separatism and refuse to support the national liberation movement in Xinjiang.

It is worth noting that the implementation of joint Kazakstani-Chinese oil projects could result in China becoming the largest consumer of Kazakstani oil in the first quarter of the next century. In other words, the

Caspian Sea could become for China's economy what the Persian Gulf is for the U.S. economy today. But who can guarantee that Beijing will not match its economic role in Central Asia with an attempt to establish its own military-political control in the region?

### **REGIONAL SECURITY LINKS IN ASIA**

The Asian axis of Kazakstani security policy also includes Kazakstan's policy toward the Islamic world. Kazakstan is a participant in both the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) and the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC). Kazakstan sees its participation in the ECO primarily in terms of facilitating its role as a transit corridor for international commerce and the creation of a corresponding communications infrastructure. Kazakstan has a rather detached stance toward the OIC. For example, Kazakstani President Nazarbaev did not participate in the December 1997 OIC meeting in Tehran. Nonetheless, Kazakstan's priorities, such as the CICA and the ecological catastrophe in the Aral Sea, were reflected in the meeting's agenda. It is also significant that the OIC meeting was held in Iran. The new Iranian leadership confirmed its intention to persuade Kazakstan to construct an export pipeline through Iran. Compared to the alternatives, this route is the most logical in economic terms, and in terms of Iran's preparedness and political stability. However, Kazakstan's renunciation of the Iranian project, announced during President Nazarbaev's November 1997 visit to Washington, coincided with the suspension of Kazakstani oil deliveries to Iran as part of their previous "oil swap" deal. Despite this decision, Iran, along with Russia, remains a major participant in the struggle over the resources of the Caspian, owing to its location, access to warm water ports, and long experience with oil extraction. As a result, Kazakstan has no choice but to deal with Tehran as a partner in the development of the Caspian. One possible development, an about-face by Washington and a radical improvement in U.S.-Iranian relations, would minimize the contradictions currently plaguing Kazakstani policy in this area. However, the odds that such an improvement will take place before 2000 appear quite slim.

Returning to the December 1997 OIC meeting in Tehran, it should be mentioned that Iran did much to facilitate the adoption of a resolution supporting Kazakstan's CICA initiative. The CICA is among the most important and successful foreign policy initiatives

of Kazakstan. The concept of the CICA was first broached by Kazakstani President Nazarbaev at the United Nations in 1992, and, by 1993, the first meetings within the framework of the Asian Security Conference were held. Initially, the CICA was presented as an Asian analogue to the OSCE. However, the political realities of Asia led to inevitable adjustments. The Asian countries did not want to copy the European model, especially the principle of the inviolability of borders. In response, Kazakstan proposed that the CICA emphasize the introduction of confidence-building measures. International monitoring of such matters as national nuclear programs, economic reforms, and human rights remained more controversial.

From 1993 to 1997, several sub-groups took shape among the participants in the CICA process. The first group, comprising countries directly surrounding the Central Asian region—Turkey, Iran, Pakistan, and India—is characterized by its active support of the Kazakstani CICA concept. The second group, representing the great powers of Asia—Russia, China, and Japan—initially had reservations about the Kazakstani proposals, but later decided to participate in order to avoid being excluded from this virtually pan-Asian forum. Finally, the third group, whose list of members fluctuates, consists of countries geographically removed from Central Asia: Australia, the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), several Arab states, and the CIS. The CICA process has also received organizational and other support from the United Nations, the OSCE, the Arab League, and the OIC. As a result of this Kazakstani initiative, a regular exchange of opinions on political issues—including security issues—takes place between Asian states. CICA participants are currently discussing three groups of issues: military-political affairs, social-economic development, and humanitarian concerns. Since 1997, even the United States has participated in the CICA as an observer.

### SECURITY TIES WITH RUSSIA AND THE CIS

It would be senseless to try to analyze Kazakstani security policy without examining links with Russia and the CIS. Both states—the Russian Federation and the Republic of Kazakstan—are not only participants in the CIS, but have also signed other regional economic and security cooperation agreements such as the 1992 Tashkent Treaty on Collective Security, a mutual defense treaty, and the Customs Union, a free trade agreement

which also includes Belarus and Kyrgyzstan. In 1994, President Nazarbaev made a presentation in Moscow in which he proposed the creation of a Eurasian Union. In the final analysis, this would have meant resurrecting the Soviet Union in the context of new political and economic conditions. Ukraine and Uzbekistan opposed the project with sharp criticism. Russia reacted to the idea of the Eurasian Union with indifference, apparently considering it unrealistic. It is possible that this was a political maneuver that Kazakstan needed to make, given the complex condition of its bilateral relationships and the *de facto* disintegration of the CIS in 1994-95. At this time, Kazakstan felt pressure from Russia on issues such as dual citizenship, the rights of Kazakstan's Russian-speaking population, the status of Russia's strategic installations on the territory of Kazakstan, and economic relations.

Despite such difficulties, Russia and Kazakstan are currently working on the following issues: streamlining customs procedures within the framework of the Customs Union; defining the status of the Kazakstani-Russian border (Kazakstan was offended by Moscow's use of Cossack units to guard the border); discussing the future of CIS troops on the Tajik-Afghan border; working toward the creation of a unified air defense system; and negotiating Russia's delivery of Su-27 fighters as compensation for the removal from Kazakstan in 1994 of a division of former Soviet strategic bombers.

Among the most complex issues that Russia and Kazakstan face in their bilateral relationship is the issue of the status of the Caspian Sea and its demilitarization. This is one area where Moscow and Almaty have not yet found a compromise. In addition to the five Caspian states, the interests of the United States, Western Europe, Turkey, Ukraine, Georgia, and China are involved. All of this complicates the resolution of the Caspian issue, which in the future will be a major determinant of Kazakstan's economic security, and could also affect the negotiation of the CANWFZ.

Interestingly, while Russia obviously plays an important role in Kazakstan's security, the opposite also holds true: Russian politicians and experts closely follow developments in Kazakstan and consider them linked with Russian national security. Some in the Russian elite view Kazakstan as a "concave mirror," appreciating the dangers for Russia of ethnic conflict in Kazakstan. This situation contrasts with that prevailing in 1992-95, when Russia actively encouraged Russian nationalism in the

so-called “near abroad.” Apparently, the primary concerns of Kremlin strategists are now linked to fears that Kazakstan might become Russia’s “soft underbelly.” Despite visible improvement in bilateral relations with the countries of the region, Russia continues to intensify its program for repatriating the Russian population from Central Asia. From a foreign policy point of view, Moscow is also disturbed by the degree to which Kazakstan may achieve a rapprochement with the Islamic world. No one in Russia doubts any longer that such a rapprochement is underway. In a more cautious manner, Russian politicians are looking closely at Kazakstani-Chinese cooperation and remain undecided: do improving Kazakstani-Chinese ties have positive or negative implications for Russia?

### **KAZAKSTANI SECURITY POLICY IN CENTRAL ASIA**

The security of Kazakstan is impossible to separate from the security of the entire Central Asian region. Using many different parameters—geographical, historical, and cultural—the republics of the region identify themselves as one homogeneous whole. The process of Central Asian integration was given its first impulse even before the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991. However, the first substantive steps were taken in 1994, when the CAU was formed. The CAU is oriented toward integration according to the European model. It plans to create unified customs and banking systems, form a currency union, facilitate the formation of branch and interbranch international consortia, and establish zones where capital, labor, goods, and services can circulate freely. CAU participants have achieved consensus on many issues: they jointly agreed on the introduction of convertible national currencies, thus withdrawing from the Russia-controlled ruble zone; they collaborated to ensure the defense of their borders with Afghanistan during the crisis in Tajikistan; and in 1996-97 the CAU states developed a joint position in relation to the Taliban regime in Afghanistan. Centrazbat—a joint creation of CAU and NATO—has been functioning since 1995. While these countries do not always share success in the economic sphere, in the political sphere they generally do manage to achieve consensus. Nevertheless, each of the states of the CAU has its own national interests and its own vision for ensuring its national security and the security of the region.

To complete an examination of security issues in Cen-

tral Asia, we should briefly touch upon the question of Islam. When the Soviet Union collapsed, the Islamic threat to stability in Central Asia was widely discussed in the West. Russia and China also were concerned with the growth of so-called Islamic fundamentalism, and, as was later shown in Chechnya and Xinjiang, not without reason. Islam also has played a distinct role in the escalation of the civil war in Tajikistan. In theory, Islam could serve as a new unifying force capable of filling the spiritual and ideological vacuum created by the collapse of communist ideology in the Central Asian states. But in Kazakstan, this possibility seems remote. Of the five Central Asian states, Kazakstan is probably the last in which Islam could be exploited by the political opposition. The current political opposition in Kazakstan has a definite secular character. Nevertheless, the Islamic factor is present just below the surface in the relations of the Central Asian states with the outside world. Not far from Central Asia’s borders, Islam is a real political force in Afghanistan and Xinjiang.

### **CONCLUSION**

The current level of political stability and security in the Central Asian region (excluding Tajikistan) is reassuring. However, in the future, certain developments may prove destabilizing. The most obvious potential destabilizing factor today is the struggle for control over Caspian oil. However other possible destabilizing events include an abrupt weakening of Russia, with a concurrent shift in the balance of power in the CIS; a Chinese decision to switch from economic penetration into the region to military-political domination; the escalation and possible spillover of the conflict in Afghanistan; a crisis between the United States and Iran; and a possible struggle for regional leadership and a resulting confrontation within Central Asia itself. Nevertheless, the present balance of geopolitical powers and interests in Central Asia allows one to hope that regional stability and security will be ensured.

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<sup>1</sup> For more on the struggle to determine Kazakstan’s nuclear future, see Murat Laumulin, “Political Aspects of Kazakhstan’s Current Nuclear Policies,” *The Nonproliferation Review* 3 (Fall 1995), pp. 84-90.