

# Kazakhstan and Central Asia in the 1990s

Apr 27, 1992



In-Depth Reports

**N**ow that we in Kazakhstan have won our independence we clearly see how far we are lagging behind the rest of the world. Our state policy is aimed at opening doors to the world. We seek the cooperation of the U.S. and the rest of the industrialized world, not only in industry, but in humanity, for the sake of our children.

## Kazakhstan's National Goals

We will be firmly committed to the principles of democracy. Moreover, our history does not contain a single instance of aggression. We have fought for our freedom and dignity, but never for another people's land. We plan to pursue a foreign policy based on peace, mutual respect and a firm commitment to keep international treaties and obligations. Over the past year, our leadership has undertaken state visits to Turkey, India, Pakistan, China and the United Kingdom, and soon the United States. This is not only to conclude new agreements as the agreements concluded in our name by the old Soviet Union are moot, but to build relations and understanding. We are trying to move from acting tactically to strategically.

We in Kazakhstan see our future as a continental bridge between East and West, and as a stabilizing force in the newly-formed Commonwealth of Independent States, mitigating the centrifugal forces that threaten to disrupt people's lives. And we believe our approach is bearing fruit.

We will join the processes of the international community and observe international agreements under the aegis of the UN, the Helsinki Accords and the various arms control treaties. Our greatest interest lies in improving our difficult economic situation and we hope to join the relevant international organizations so as to slough off our current stagnation. To that end, we have enacted domestic laws to facilitate trade and development and will sign similar agreements with other countries.

## Nuclear Weapons

In their joint declaration of December 1991, the leaders of Russia, Kazakhstan, Belarus and the Ukraine agreed not to allow the spread of nuclear weapons or their components. We in Kazakhstan have no tactical nuclear weapons. We do have strategic weapons, however, whose destruction is a complicated process, requiring significant time and resources. In addition, these missiles-which we ourselves never wanted-are in hardened silos, which makes the process more difficult.

We want to be a nuclear-free state. We are ready to sign the Non-Proliferation Treaty and join in all necessary negotiations as to reductions in both nuclear weapons and conventional forces.

The strategic forces on Kazakh territory are under the control of the Russian President and we cannot touch them. As it stands, they can only be used with the accord of the presidents of all four nuclear republics of the former Soviet Union. We think this present agreement does not go far enough. We have never desired, and do not desire, to be part of the nuclear club and we unambiguously support all the proposals made in the context of the START agreements.

## Islam in Kazakhstan

We do feel close to the countries of the Middle East in spirit and ways of life and we do have close relations with Arab countries and economic ties with Iran.

I would assure you, though, that we are not infected by Islamic fundamentalism. We will build a secular state, where religion will have its place but not be a ruling institution.

We hope to establish our relations with the countries of the Middle East on a normal basis. A year ago we began to develop contacts with Israeli businesses. We have received Israel's ambassador to Russia, Arye Levin, and the head of the Jewish Agency, Simcha Dinitz, and we hope to soon realize an agreement on the normalization of relations.

The above remarks were excerpted from Mr. Kasimov's full presentation. ❖

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