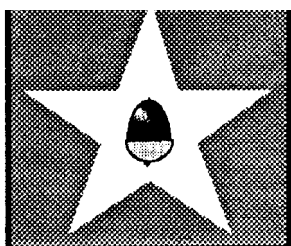


Conflict Studies Research Centre

H Plater-Zyberk

**Kazakhstan:
Security & Defence Challenges**

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In Search Of Identity

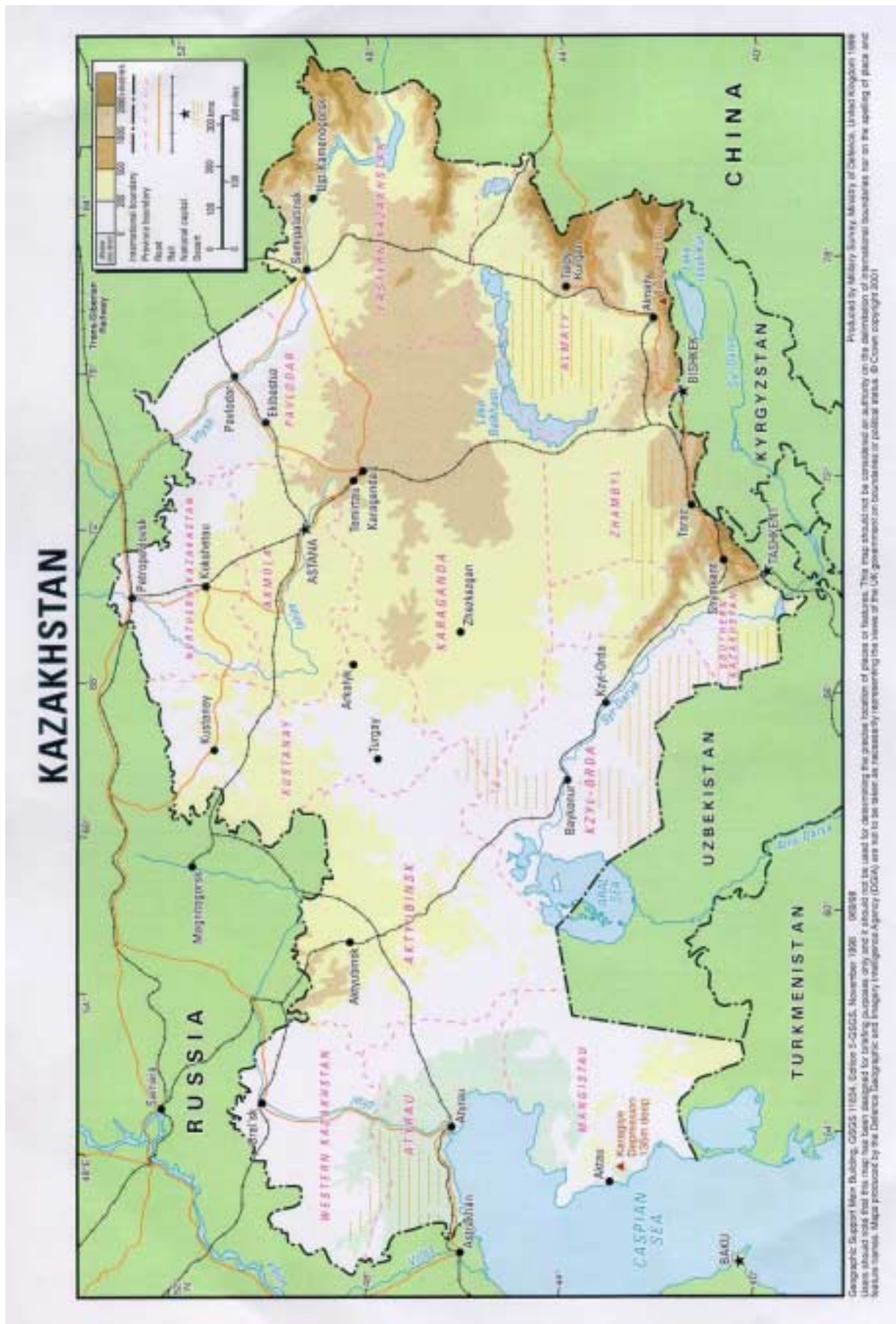
The history of Kazakhstan as an independent state and one of the youngest and the biggest members of the UN is very brief. A large section of the Kazakh population was decimated under Tsarist rule. The last uprising before the October revolution, in protest against general mobilization, took place in 1916, was suppressed, and many thousands of Kazakhs were killed or had to flee to China. After the October revolution, the Kazakh nationalists from the Alash Orda underground movement tried to establish an autonomous Kazakh region, with Semipalatinsk as its capital. The revolt was put down. Divided and disorganized, the movement hesitated which side to take in the Red-White conflict. Finally they supported the Bolsheviks, something they must have regretted almost immediately when they were first removed from the Communist Party of Kazakhstan and then from 1925 onwards executed or sent by the Bolsheviks to labour camps.

On 26 August 1920, the Kazakhs became a part of an Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic covering several ethnic groups, which was divided into two main parts called Kyrgyzia and Turkestan. Kazakhstan was made a full Socialist Republic in 1936. Until the mid 1920s the Russians called the Kazakhs "Kyrgyz" so as to distinguish them from Cossacks - both words are of Turkic origin, mean "free man" and sound very similar in Russian. To make a clear distinction between the two ethnic groups they called the Kyrgyz proper Kara (Black) Kyrgyz.

The resistance to the forced collectivization campaign at the end of the 1930s resulted in executions, arrests, deportations and another wave of refugees escaping to China. By the end of the 1930s, the Kazakhs represented 30% of the population. The arrival of deported Koreans in 1937 and later the Volga Germans further upset the ethnic balance of the republic. In the late 1950s another wave of immigrants, estimated at 800,000, came with Khrushchev's plan to develop agriculture on 250,000 sq km of the steppes of North Kazakhstan.¹

When in early December 1991, at a quiet retreat in Belovezha, the leaders of Russia, Ukraine and Belorussia decided to dissolve the USSR, the Kazakhs and other Central Asian states were not consulted or invited to vote. The Kazakh leader Nursultan Nazarbayev was against the dissolution. Kazakhstan therefore became independent without even trying. The Kazakhstanis declared their independence at the end of December 1991. The most immediate visible result of the declaration was the outflow of non-Kazakh nationals - 2,300,000 people of several nationalities left Kazakhstan between 1991 and 1996. The Russians living in the northern part of the country and in industrialized, military and commercial areas in Akte, Atirau, Chikment, Dzhambul, Almaty, Taldy Kurgan, Uskemen and Semey began to leave. Some of them were members of the Communist Party or the Soviet state apparatus, some worked for centrally, ie Moscow, funded enterprises and suddenly found

Map: Kazakhstan



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themselves made redundant. Others were replaced by Kazakhs and many simply went home, to Russia or other republics.

This emigration combined with the return of thousands of Kazakhs from other parts of the USSR brought the percentage of ethnic Kazakhs living in Kazakhstan to 48% by 1998. The Russians represented then 34% of the population.² The emigration continued to outpace immigration and the birthrate and by 1 January 2001 the total population of Kazakhstan was estimated at 14,841,900, of which 53% were ethnic Kazakhs, 30% Russians, 3.7% Ukrainians 2.5% Uzbeks and 2.4% ethnic Germans.³

A country blessed with rich natural resources including oil, gas, coal, iron ore, nickel, gold, silver, zinc, copper and phosphates, similar in its size to the whole of Europe, with a population slightly smaller than that of the Netherlands, part of which felt closer to Moscow than to the Kazakh capital Almaty, or later Astana, had not a lot to worry about. Six persons per sq km makes it one of the most sparsely populated countries in the world. In neighbouring China the average population density is approximately 140 per sq km. However, the main asset of Kazakhstan immediately after its independence was probably its president Nursultan Abishevich Nazarbayev.

Nursultan Abishevich Nazarbayev

After the putsch of August 1991, at the age of 51, Nursultan Nazarbayev left the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), where he spent most of his working life and to which he owed his political career. He was propelled to power in Kazakhstan at the end of 1989 when Moscow replaced the corrupt but popular local 1st Secretary of the Communist Party Dinmukhamed Kunayev with a Russian, Gennadiy Kolbin. After several violent demonstrations organized by Kunayev's supporters and other well-meaning Kazakhs, Moscow replaced Kolbin with Nursultan Nazarbayev. Nazarbayev, a calm and thoughtful leader, was a good administrator and politician and compared favourably with Gorbachev and Yeltsin. In 1990, as the CPSU was losing its importance, Nazarbayev was elected President of Kazakhstan by a pliable (selected not elected) Kazakh parliament. The first Kazakh constitution of 28 January 1993 gave him considerable powers. He approached the independence forced upon him cautiously. Considering the multitude of formidable tasks he faced, this was not surprising. He had to put together and keep together a very large country with a very small population of which a large part did not identify themselves as citizens of Kazakhstan, a country which had very short historical roots, and a poorly defined identity.

Only with China, one of the five neighbours with whom it had land borders, had Kazakhstan a delineated, demarcated and reasonably well guarded border, a relic from the Soviet era. When Kazakhstan gained its independence, its new borders had until then been administrative borders inside the USSR. There was no agreed border on the Aral Sea (1,070 km). Kazakhstan had no part in guarding the Caspian Sea maritime border (1,894 km) between the USSR and Iran. Kazakhstan's only border guards were on the Chinese border. The Russians were happy to contribute to their upkeep but had no interest in assisting in setting up the protection of other Kazakh borders. Kazakhstan "inherited" plenty of Soviet military hardware, deployed on its soil in case of a conflict with China, or stored far away from the European disarmament and verification treaties, but was short of personnel, the necessary border infrastructure and military know-how.

Its economy was welded to the Russian economy, hardly an advantage at the best of times and no one could remember those. The emigration of qualified Slavs and Germans in the early 1990s depleted personnel in Kazakh industry, armed forces and administration. Foreign policies and foreign trade links had to be established from scratch. Like the other Central Asian republics, Kazakhstan needed more than a statesman, it needed a nation-builder.

Nazarbayev first tried to strengthen the state apparatus and reinforce his own position. He even head-hunted Major-General Karpukhin, the ex-commander of the Soviet elite anti-terrorist Alfa unit and one of the scapegoats of the 1991 Moscow putsch, to organize his personal security. By mid 1992, Nazarbayev had renamed the Kazakh KGB the National Security Committee (KNC) and begun to build a new, strong security system.

Nazarbayev was more cautious when it came economic reforms, mainly because Russia could hurt Kazakhstan economically and could not therefore be antagonised. He understood very quickly that President Yeltsin and his court did not intend to treat the Commonwealth of Independent States as a commonwealth of equal states and that privatization and economic reforms in Russia would hurt everyone economically close to her. In November 1993 Kazakhstan introduced its own currency, the tenge. Political instability in Russia and personal disagreements with Boris Yeltsin forced Nursultan Nazarbayev to look for other economic, military and security contacts and that, considering the wealth, the size and the location of Kazakhstan was not difficult at all, especially since the Kazakh constitution gave the president the sole responsibility for formulating foreign policy.

Nazarbayev did not allow his country to become a kleptocratic democracy like Russia. He achieved this by stricter control of his own administration, the business community and the opposition. He was immediately accused by the opposition and human rights groups of dictatorial practices but, a decade later, remains popular with a majority of Kazakhstanis. The Kazakh political system can hardly be called a liberal democracy, but Nazarbayev's political opponents do not offer realistic alternatives and solutions to the challenges facing their country. Nursultan Nazarbayev is the only Kazakh politician to have shown a nation building sense. He gained popularity in spite of, rather than because of his communist past. Having celebrated its 10th anniversary not so long ago, Kazakhstan cannot reach into past experience to build its democracy or statehood. For decades the Kazakhs were a minority in their own country. During its Soviet period, Kazakhstan had no borders with either a democratic country, or a country with a democratic history, from which it could learn or be inspired. The Kazakh diaspora lived in other similarly undemocratic countries or in Soviet republics. Kazakhs were never treated like equal partners by Moscow and were poorly represented in important, prestigious or influential positions at Union level. The pool of Kazakh politicians able to operate at national level was very small and the Western style reforms suggested by the opposition looked like a good thing only to those who advocated them. The harassment of the opposition by the security services was reprehensible but did nothing to make their arguments politically convincing.

Kazakhstan needs Nazarbayev but the question is, for how long? His foreign policy is pragmatic and successful. His internal policies may lead to future problems as the gap between the rich and the poor is growing and so are the rumours about his personal wealth and his nepotism. The greed of his relatives and hangers-on may weaken Nazarbayev's position in years ahead. As he himself admitted, corruption is one of the biggest threats to Kazakhstan.⁴

Locking Up The Borders

The Russian Ministry of Defence noticed Kazakhstan's preparation for its new role as the "power centre" in Central Asia in Autumn 1992.⁵ If there was indeed such a plan the Kazakhs were very relaxed about it. They were not threatened by their neighbours. There were several minor border disagreements with China, festering from the Soviet era, and one or two border delineation discords with Uzbekistan. Once Nazarbayev understood that the CIS would not become an economic community and that the acronym looked more like the Commonwealth of Indecisive States, he began to look for other options. The reaffirmation of his country's political and economic independence was the only logical move and so the delineation and demarcation of the national borders was given top priority.⁶ The reasons for the construction of the new borders was partly a nation/state building process, and partly a barrier against illegal migration, drug trafficking and uncontrolled border-area trading. The old Soviet Border Guard Higher Command School in Almaty began to train Kazakh officers; rank and file and NCOs are selected from the conscript pool.

The 1,740 km border with China was the only well protected Kazakh border, built and equipped in the Soviet era for a possible large scale military conflict after the Russo-Chinese border clashes at the end of the 1960s. One of the world's most fortified borders for more than thirty years, the Kazakh-Chinese border was patrolled jointly by the CIS troops after the break-up of the Soviet Union (Moscow probably still discreetly assists the Kazakh border guards in this area). The Kazakhs would like to keep this section of its borders shut, to keep illegal immigrants and smugglers away. In April 1994 the two countries signed a border agreement and later two supplementary agreements because the Chinese demanded further adjustments. In one of these agreements China received a portion of the lands near the upper reaches of the Chernyy Irtysh. The final delineation agreement was signed in July 1998. The Chinese President Jiang Zemin declared then that the border issue between the two countries was completely resolved.⁷ In May 2002 China and Kazakhstan signed a protocol on the demarcation of their common border.⁸ This allowed the Kazakhs to transfer some border troops to other sections of their border. However, according to parliamentary deputy B Zakayev, 70% of all Kazakh border troops are still deployed on the Chinese border.⁹

The talks on delineation of the 2,203 km Kazakh-Uzbek border only began in 2000. This was not an easy task because the Uzbeks had earlier entered a disputed border area and began to mark the border without consulting their northern neighbour. The two countries found it difficult to agree on three sections of their common border, the 4,500 hectares around Bagys village in the Saryagach District, the Turkestanets settlement, and the Arnasay dam.¹⁰ The administrative borders between the two republics were adopted by the Kazakh SSR, Uzbek SSR and by the USSR Supreme Soviet in 1956, 1963 and 1971 on the basis of an imprecise map drawn in 1940. The talks were stalled when 2,000 inhabitants of Bagys village refused to join Uzbekistan. The decision to speed up border delimitation was taken by the presidents of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, in a telephone conversation on 16 March 2001.¹¹ By the end of May 2002, 3% of the border was still to be delineated.¹²

Russia and Kazakhstan signed their first border agreement in 1994. So far the two countries have delineated 6,500 km of their common border, the total length of which is 7,598.6 km.¹³ The second phase of border delineation, a 1,020 km stretch in the Omsk region began in May 2002.¹⁴ The border with Russia will serve as a

filter against traffickers and illegal migration and in the collection of customs duties. Russia introduced the first regular customs control on trains from Eastern Kazakhstan in July 2001.¹⁵

The talks on the Kazakh-Turkmen and Kazakh-Kyrgyz borders also began only in 2000 but they are expected to run smoothly as all three countries would like to make their borders less transparent as soon as possible and all three have already signed bilateral border cooperation agreements. The protection of the southern borders and the tensions over the Caspian Sea coastal areas put the strengthening of the border guards at the top of the Kazakh defence and security agenda. Transferred from the KGB/KNB at the beginning of the 1990s to the Armed Forces, the border guards were resubordinated once again to the KNB at the end of the 1990s. Between 1997 and 2002 the border guarding budget increased fivefold. The border troops are divided into four regional directorates.¹⁶ Attempts have been made to integrate the operational functions of the four border districts with the four military districts, in case of what was seen before 11 September 2001 as the probability of cross border attacks by Islamic extremists. The total number of border guards was originally planned at 40,000 but the permanent shortage of qualified personnel would suggest that this number has not been achieved.¹⁷ There is also problem with the professionalism and discipline of the border troops. In 1993, as a sign of CIS cooperation, the Kazakhs sent a 500 strong border guard battalion to the Tajik-Afghan border. As the Kazakhs began to erect their own border, most of the soldiers and officers serving in the battalion were transferred home.

In a post 11 September 2001 security campaign, the border guards took part in operation Migrant, identifying, detaining or expelling illegal immigrants and migrant workers attempting to enter Russia and foreigners living illegally in Kazakhstan. Between 20 September 2001 and 9 October 2001 operation Migrant identified 10,119 violators of the passport regime, including 714 from outside the CIS; 5,351 people were deported from Kazakhstan.¹⁸

This new policy means stronger border control, new visa regulations, a stricter approach to transit travellers, better control of commercial international traffic and increasing importance for the border guards and their KNB patrons.

A Sea Or A Hot Spot?

The five countries sharing the Caspian Sea coastline and its resources (Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Iran, Azerbaijan and Russia) should be interested in keeping the area peaceful, as this would allow them to explore and export the area's rich natural resources. After years of diplomatic toing and froing the littoral states have failed to reach a multilateral agreement on who owns what. The bilateral agreement signed by Astana and Moscow in July 1998 was immediately declared invalid by Iran.¹⁹ Teheran is afraid that with Western technology and investment the former Soviet republics will be able to develop their oil and gas industry faster and insists the Caspian Sea resources belong to all littoral states. The signing, in March 2002, of the of the agreement between Russia and Kazakhstan on the division of the Caspian seabed and on the joint development of hydrocarbon deposits, provoked an immediate and strong Iranian reaction. Already in March, in anticipation of the Russo-Kazakh agreement, Teheran urged the UN to cancel any bilateral agreements signed by Kazakhstan with other Caspian states.²⁰ Two days after the Russo-Kazakh agreement was signed, the Iranian navy in the Caspian Sea was put on high

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alert against Kazakhstan. Rear-Admiral Abbas Mohtaj, Commander of the Iranian Navy, said that Iran considers half of the Caspian Sea to be its own territorial waters and the appearance in them of Kazakh naval vessels will be considered as an attack on Iran.²¹ Iran is especially concerned that the \$5m offered Kazakhstan by the USA to improve security in the Caspian region and helping the formation of a Kazakh motor-rifle brigade in the Atyrau region will gradually lead to US influence on the Kazakh units in the area.²²

Although militarily much stronger than Kazakhstan, Iran would stand little chance in a confrontation because it would also have to face Russia and the US protecting their economic interests. Nevertheless, Astana announced its intention to strengthen its defence in the region with a coastal defence unit.²³ Kazakhstan is trying to build its own navy to protect its Caspian Sea interests. The Kazakh Navy has about 3,000 men, 10 coastal patrol boats, 10 hydrographic boats, three Mi-8 and 6 Mi-2 helicopters. The Kazakhs are helped by the USA, Russia and Turkey.²⁴ Astana is happy that Moscow has recently been flexing its Caspian Sea Naval muscles. In the naval exercises conducted by Russia at the beginning of August 2002, the Caspian Flotilla deployed 10,000 troops, 60 ships, 30 aircraft and helicopters.²⁵

The Main Enemy

Kazakhstan has no enemies, although relations with Iran could be much better. Almost all ethnic Kazakhs are classified as Muslims, the overwhelming majority of them Sunnis. This is why the government in Astana is particularly concerned about radical Islamic organizations attempting to operate in Kazakhstan. Two such organizations, Hizb-ut-Tahrir and Tabligi Djamat, appeared in the Kentau region of Southern Kazakhstan at the end of 2000. In March 2001 Kazakhstan declared itself ready to help Kyrgyzstan against their own and Uzbek Islamic militants preparing a spring offensive.²⁶ In spite of the strenuous efforts of the Kazakh security services both organizations reappear from time to time in Kazakhstan. In October 2001 Hizb-ut-Tahrir distributed leaflets criticizing the US action in Afghanistan.²⁷ In January 2002 a small group of extremists suspected of planning a bombing campaign in Astana was arrested by the KNB.²⁸ Other members of the group distributed Kazakh language leaflets in Southern Kazakhstan in April 2002.²⁹ Tabligi Djamat keeps a lower profile but is known to organize four-month courses for the propagators of "pure Islam".³⁰

When the first timid signs of Muslim radicalism appeared in Kazakhstan at the beginning of 2000, Astana strengthened its border guards, the Army, the Ministry of Interior and raised the defence and security budget. The Kazakh Foreign Ministry recalled students studying at religious institutions in Islamic countries with which it had no agreements on mutual recognition of diplomas.³¹ After the attack on the World Trade Centre, the draft defence budget for 2002 increased by 32% and the total budget for security by more than 25%.³²

To combat terrorism Kazakhstan had several anti-terrorist teams. The best known is Aristan, a renamed KGB Alfa unit based in the past in Almaty. The Ministry of Interior is responsible for two special forces units, "Sunkar" and "Berkut".³³ Almaty regional criminal police department set up its own rapid reaction group Kyran, probably as a result of the transfer of Aristan to the new capital, Astana. Kyran was expected to have 10 teams deployed in Almaty.³⁴

The 11 September 2001 attacks resulted in several changes in the thinking of regional politicians and anti-terrorist commanders. Kazakhstan tightened its already tight security rules. One month after the attack, Kazakhstan decided to make a complete inventory of weapons, military hardware and ammunition.³⁵ The security tightening included rechecking biographies of all Kazakh civilian pilots and stricter airport checks.³⁶ The biggest change, however, was the immediate willingness of all CIS and Shanghai Cooperation Council members to plan future anti-terrorist measures. The CIS anti-terrorist centre acquired a new lease of life, and the contacts between law enforcement organizations in the Central Asian states and their Russian counterparts intensified. The Shanghai Cooperation Council issued a statement after a meeting of the heads of law enforcement agencies in Astana on 23 May 2002 announcing their closer cooperation.³⁷ Russia, Tajikistan, China, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan decided to coordinate their anti-terrorist and organized crime campaigns. Uzbekistan declined the invitation. The Shanghai Group plans to set up a regional antiterrorist system.³⁸ The next stage would be close formal or informal cooperation between the two organizations in which Kazakhstan, a full and dependable member of both structures and with improving contacts in the USA and Europe would play an important role. Also in June Kazakhstan and India agreed to create a working group which would address the issues connected with combating terrorism.³⁹

Defence

President Nazarbayev's early emphasis on good neighbourly relations is paying dividends. The occasional incursions from Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan of Islamic extremists brought about faster development of the Kazakh armed forces and better cooperation between the countries in Central Asia. Kazakhstan has been cautious with its military cooperation and alliances, prioritizing its tasks and carefully balancing its financial capabilities.

The Russians were particularly keen to maintain and further develop an integrated early warning and air defence system. The system could have benefited Russia and individual Kazakh officers working with their Russian colleagues on new technologically advanced air defence systems, but its benefit for Kazakhstan was not evident. Kazakhstan was not about to be attacked by anyone. The presence of many Russian officers in Kazakhstan would not be conducive to the development of international military contacts with other countries and even if Russia was willing to spend money on the CIS defence system,⁴⁰ Kazakhstan had other defence and security priorities. However, Kazakh air defence troops have taken part in several joint air defence manoeuvres as a part of a learning curve and to pacify Moscow politically.

For its own air defence Kazakhstan uses two S-300 systems to protect the capital Astana and the city of Karaganda.⁴¹ The S-300 should be able to shoot down any hijacked plane threatening one or both cities. Not expecting any military conflicts, in 1999 President Nazarbayev transferred the State Border Protection Forces, including the Caspian Naval element, to the KNB. Even the formation of four military districts, Southern, Eastern, Western and Central, in 2000 was explained by him as a response "to the challenges posed by extremists".⁴² The formation of four military districts was accompanied by dramatic increases in the defence budget, which increased from the equivalent of \$172m in 2001 to \$226m in 2002.⁴³ This impressive rise still makes the Kazakh defence budget only about 1/3 of the smallest national defence budget among NATO member countries (Luxembourg

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excluded). By November 2001, Nazarbayev announced that Kazakhstan was able to respond to any external threats.⁴⁴

The four military districts are to be combat ready in 2003. The formation of the Southern Military District with its HQ in Taraz was completed at the beginning of 2001. The district protects Almaty, Kzyl Orda, Zhambyl and other parts of the region. It will also take part in future joint operations against Islamic radicals in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. The Southern District will be working closely with the Eastern Military District, focusing on mountain training, following incursions from Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan.⁴⁵

The Western Military District with its HQ in Aktobe is to provide defence for the Caspian Sea region and is commanded by a Rear-Admiral.⁴⁶ All four military districts will have elements of the Kazakh Military Intelligence Service, set up in 1996.⁴⁷ All military districts are also to support border troops operations controlled by the KNB.

Concerned about the activities of the Islamic radicals in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, the Kazakhs together with other Central Asian countries took part in several anti-terrorist exercises before September 2001. (The largest military exercise which has taken place in post-Soviet Kazakhstan was an anti-terrorist war game.)⁴⁸ So concerned was Astana by the activities of the Islamic groups across its southern borders that in 1999 and 2000 it provided Kyrgyzstan with a helicopter, large scale military maps, warm clothes and ammunition.⁴⁹ Numerically the Kazakh Army is about 70,000 men and there is no shortage of slightly dated military hardware.⁵⁰ The Interior Ministry staff rose after the September terrorist attacks to 97,577.⁵¹ This figure probably includes the Kazakh National Guard. What the Kazakh Armed Forces lack is full democratic control, modern educational and training methods and, as always, funds. Ten years after Kazakhstan became independent all top officials in the Kazakh Ministry of Defence are now graduates from respectable Russian military schools and academies but have no other foreign experience or relevant foreign education. In the near future, this may become the biggest obstacle in building new modern Kazakh armed forces.

Helping Kazakhstan & Gaining Influence In Astana

Because of its geostrategic position and the abundance of natural resources many countries are happy to assist the Kazakh military, and more discreetly the Kazakh security services. Moscow is still Astana's largest military partner. In 2000 there were 1,200 Kazakh citizens undergoing military training in Russia.⁵² All top Kazakh officers graduated from two or more Soviet military colleges and academies. Even the younger officers speak fluent Russian and the cost of education in Russia can be set against the money Moscow pays for renting military facilities in Kazakhstan.

When Kazakhstan declared its independence, it had on its soil several large military formations, the Baykonur space centre, military industrial enterprises, research centres and test ranges. Several Kazakh enterprises took part in producing, or produced whole items of military equipment. A super fast torpedo, Shkvall, was produced by one of the Almaty enterprises and five Kazakh enterprises took part in the construction of the Soviet strategic nuclear submarines.⁵³ In the spring of 1992 the Kazakhs "adopted" the 32nd Army, an element of the Soviet strategic group, by bribing its commander Major-General Anatoliy Ryabtsev. The Russians in turn

sprinted out of Kazakhstan an artillery division.⁵⁴ All this did not help to build mutual trust.

Moscow wanted to keep the Baykonur Space Centre, so in 1994 it officially rented it for 20 years for an annual fee of \$115m. The two countries appear to have left themselves an escape clause by making the payment mechanism for the lease purposefully vague.⁵⁵ The Russians also leased the Kapustin Yar 4th Test Range, Sary Shagan in Karaganda region, the Emba test range and an air force combat training ground - Vladimirovka 929th Test Flight Centre. (After a missile accident in Atyrau Region, in August 2001, the Kazakh Ministry of Defence suggested the Russians should use the Sary Shagan range for future large-scale tests, instead of the Ashuluk range, from which the faulty missile was launched.)⁵⁶ The Russians kept their early warning radar station in Balkhash with the Kazakhs taking part in the combat duties of a united air defence system.⁵⁷ The Kazakhs also cooperate very closely with the Russian special services.

The United States have been supporting Kazakh defence and security bodies since December 1993 when the Kazakh parliament ratified in the treaty on non-production and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and the US oil companies began to invest heavily in Kazakhstan. In 1994 Russia accused Kazakhstan of selling an unspecified number of nuclear warheads to the US. On 12 January 1994, just before Nazarbayev's visit to the USA, the Russian daily *Izvestiya* published an article questioning the safety of the strategic nuclear missiles deployed in Kazakhstan. The Kazakhs claimed that the article was "inspired" by the head of the 12th Directorate of the Russian MOD, responsible for nuclear warheads. The Russians calculated that by selling the uranium from the nuclear warheads to the USA the Kazakhs could earn up to \$300m, while Russia could pay only half of that sum. On 13 January 1994, the Kazakhs organized a press conference to deny the *Izvestiya* allegations. The Russians found out that their campaign had failed only when the aircraft which allegedly carried the uranium taken from the missiles based in Kazakhstan was on its way back to the US. The incident did not help to improve the already strained relations between Astana and Moscow.⁵⁸ Knowing the state of the Russian armed forces, the economy and political decisionmaking in Moscow, Kazakhstan would have probably sold the uranium to the US even if the price-tag was much smaller.

In December 2001 a commercial TV station in Almaty announced that the USA was to allocate \$200m for five programmes for decommissioning Kazakhstan's nuclear facilities.⁵⁹ Six million dollars of this allocation would be spent on the destruction of the ICBM missile silos in Kazakhstan.⁶⁰ Having invested heavily in the Kazakh oil industry, in 2000 the US gave Kazakhstan \$3m to strengthen its southern borders.⁶¹ Two years later Washington gave another \$5m for strengthening the Kazakh Caspian Sea coastal defences. The USA assists the Kazakh military education and training programme and has trained police officers at the International Police Academy in Budapest.⁶²

Turkey is Kazakhstan's third largest foreign military and security partner. In August 2001, Turkey became the first country to open a military and technical mission in Kazakhstan. More than 100 Kazakhs have graduated or are currently studying at Turkish military educational institutions.⁶³ Seventy-three officers have completed peace-keeping courses in Turkey.⁶⁴ A Kazakh special forces battalion was to be trained in Turkey in accordance with the agreement signed by the two countries at the end of 2000.⁶⁵ The two countries have 11 technical military

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agreements and their programme of military cooperation envisages \$10m assistance to Kazakhstan.⁶⁶ In March 2002 Turkey offered to modernize Kazakh airfields.⁶⁷

China began to assist the Kazakh military once the main border agreements were signed. Two Kazakh officers began studying at the Chinese National Defence Academy at the beginning of 2001. The five-month course had Russian as the language of instruction.⁶⁸ In 2002 China allocated \$3.35m in no-strings aid to the Kazakh army.⁶⁹ Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan have also concluded an agreement on cooperation in military education. The diplomas obtained by the exchange students in both countries will be recognized by their defence ministries. Both countries also signed a trilateral military agreement with Turkey in March 2002.⁷⁰

Corruption

The Strategy of National Security of the Kazakh Republic for 1999-2005 described the economic security of Kazakhstan as one of the main factors in overall national security policy.⁷¹ Threats to economic security include money laundering, tax evasion, corruption and misuse of national resources. President Nazarbayev has called corruption one of the biggest threats to Kazakhstan.⁷²

Corruption is not a new phenomenon in Kazakhstan. It was developed to a fine art by Dinmukhamed Kunayev, a protégé of Leonid Brezhnev in charge of the republic between 1964 and 1986. Almost uncontrolled privatization in Russia and Kazakhstan dominated by individuals interested almost exclusively in profit maximization, the lack of border control mechanisms and moral and credible managers favoured economic and financial malpractice in Kazakhstan. (In every country with a Soviet style command economy the privatization process was painful and benefited decisive, dynamic but often corrupt and brutal individuals.) Corruption cases reported widely in the Kazakh press usually have links to export of natural resources and military hardware, the republic's most valuable commodities.

In August 1998, a coordinating council of law enforcement agencies under the Prosecutor General's office of the Republic of Kazakhstan had been set up. The council coordinates the efforts of all law enforcement bodies combating all forms of crime.⁷³ President Nazarbayev's personal crusade against corruption clashes with his own increasingly imperial rule. His practically unlimited powers granted to him by the obliging parliament improve the short term stability of the country but slow down or sidetrack the development of democratic institutions and this does not encourage democratic reforms. Nazarbayev's practically absolute power allows him to conduct a forceful anti-corruption campaign, though it is weakened periodically by incompetent and power hungry members of his own family or friends. The family transgressors are sometimes publicly admonished but never punished. In November 2001, appearing on national television, President Nazarbayev said that his children "could exercise all the rights of other citizens as long as they obeyed the law".⁷⁴ In 2001, 30,000 Kazakh officials were investigated and were required to clarify to the prosecutor's offices their decisions and actions, 29,000 official enactments were cancelled, as were 9,500 illegal rulings by government investigators and inspectors; 5,400 illegal sentences and over 3,000 decisions of courts in civil cases were cancelled or changed.⁷⁵

With all the legal and administrative tools at his disposal President Nazarbayev has all he needs to win the battle with corruption and administrative malpractice and no excuse if he loses.

The Elimination Of Nuclear & Biological Weapons

In the past Kazakhstan has been treated like a dumping ground by the military and the central planners in Moscow. Several hundred nuclear charges were exploded at the Semipalatinsk (Semey) test range between 1949-1989, of which 150 went off above or at ground level. The nuclear tests in Kazakhstan were stopped in 1989 after more than a million signatures had been collected in Kazakhstan, calling for an end to nuclear tests in the USSR and in the US. But damage was already done and certain parts of the test range were declared a disaster zone. Many generations of Kazakhs will suffer, especially in the Semey region and the full scale of the damage is yet to be fully investigated.

No announcements have been made about the present state of the removal and decommissioning of the nuclear weapons and related facilities on Kazakh soil, which considering the post September 2001 security concerns should not be surprising. Despite stringent security measures and outside financial help, the Kazakhs are not always able to control radioactive material on their territory or commercial considerations are allowed to prevail. Israel has listed Kazakhstan as a country supplying nuclear materials, nuclear systems and technologies to Iraq. Kazakh officials admitted the export of radioactive substances but insisted that the material exported was not suitable for the production of nuclear weapons.⁷⁶ On 10 June 2002 the US authorities arrested a terrorist who planned to detonate a "dirty" bomb containing radioactive material. According to the US intelligence community and the International Atomic Energy Agency the radioactive substance was stolen in Kazakhstan and was transported via Uzbekistan.⁷⁷

Kazakhstan plans to increase the extraction of uranium from 2,300 tonnes in 2001 to 2,500 in 2002 and intends to maintain and develop its expertise in nuclear power engineering.⁷⁸ The first nine Kazakh trained nuclear engineers specializing in nuclear reactors and power-generating facilities graduated from the Semipalatinsk State University in 2002.⁷⁹ They and many others will undoubtedly benefit the Kazakh nuclear power industry but will also become a focus of attention for radical groups looking for access to "dirty" bomb material.

In the Soviet Union Kazakhstan had been the second republic, after Russia, with a developed biological weapons programme. The Progress plant in Stepanogorsk in the central Aqmola region was once able to produce 2 tonnes of anthrax spores a day. Rebirth Island (Aralsk-7) and Komsomolskiy Island (Aralsk-5) which Kazakhstan shares with Uzbekistan were also biological weapons test grounds. There were also a biological weapons production enterprise and a biological institute working on cholera in Almaty and the Agricultural Research Institute in Otar in the Southern Zhambyl region researching and testing biological weapons.⁸⁰ The Kazakh attitude towards the development of biological weapons was ambiguous at the beginning of the country's independence. When the treaty banning research and development of biological weapons was signed in 1972, Kazakhstan did not exist and was not a signatory of the treaty. When the Soviet Union broke up, Kazakhstan was not legally obliged to stop the illegal research carried by the USSR. In June 1992 Mikhail Safrygin, the Kazakh First Deputy Minister of Defence, in a conversation with Dr Ken Alibek, a biological weapons expert, proposed to restart

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the programme of biological weapons research with him. Alibek refused but never found out if the suggestion originated with the Kazakhs or if someone in the Kazakh MOD was subcontracting for the Russians.⁸¹ Like the destruction of nuclear weapons, the destruction of biological weapons is a subject the Kazakhs, and the Uzbeks sharing one biological test area, are not happy to comment about. An additional problem is posed by Rebirth Island, a burial ground for a large amount of anthrax bacteria, which is gradually ceasing to be an island as a result of the shrinkage of the Aral Sea.

Water As A Bone Of Contention

The Aral Sea, or what is left of it, is another man made disaster of the Soviet period. Water from the two rivers feeding the Aral Sea - the Amudarya flowing through Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, and the Syrdarya flowing through Tajikistan and Uzbekistan - have been used for the last four decades for large irrigation projects to boost cotton production in Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan. The Aral Sea level has been "shrinking" by 20-90cm per year since 1961.⁸² With the present trend the Aral Sea may disappear by 2015. The shrinkage of the sea, incompetent irrigation methods and liberal use of pesticides and defoliants have created several environmental problems and brought economic hardship to the Aral Sea region. Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, which benefited from the cotton industry, have shown little interest in changing the irrigation system although Uzbekistan shares the Aral Sea problem.

Water shortages could provoke serious disagreements among the countries in the region. In 2000 Kazakhstan accused Uzbekistan of not carrying out its part of an official agreement to supply Kazakhstan with water from the Naryn-Syrdarya reservoirs. The Kazakhs accepted that drought in the region might be partly to blame, but said that the main culprit was the head of the interstate water reservoir department in Uzbekistan.⁸³ Kyrgyzstan reduced the supply of water to Kazakhstan in 2001, claiming that Kazakhstan was failing to meet commercial obligations in other areas.⁸⁴ The problem resurfaced in February 2002 when privatized Kazakh energy companies, disregarding the potential consequences of their action, halved the electricity supply to Kyrgyzstan, provoking power cuts even in Bishkek. Kyrgyzstan demanded an immediate resumption of the supplies and threatened to stop the supply of irrigation water to South Kazakhstan.⁸⁵ The fragmentation and privatization of the Central Asian power grid has created many problems. The new power companies feel that their transnational role ends when their commercial interests clash with old political arrangements and economic infrastructure. Their new policies may be legal and commercially justifiable but are also certain to bring new conflicts to the region.

The Chinese intention to divert the water of the Irtysh and Ile rivers into the western, poor region of Xinjiang worries Kazakhstan and would be damaging to the economy of its eastern region. The Chinese rationale behind the plan is that it would help the economic development of western Xinjiang, which is inhabited by the Uighurs and this would make their radicals less radical.

Kazakhstan's Future Security Dilemmas

In his "Message to the People of Kazakhstan - Kazakhstan 2030" President Nazarbayev says: "It is perfectly clear that neither Russia, nor China, nor the West, nor any Moslem country has any impelling motive to attack us".⁸⁶ Nevertheless, Kazakhstan is expected to modernize and strengthen its armed forces to make sure that any potential aggressor will think twice before he starts looking for impelling motives or excuses.

So Kazakhstan's future looks bright but with occasional clouds. The territorial differences with China have been solved but Astana would protest if China restarted nuclear tests in the Xinjiang province. China's annual population growth almost equals the total population of Kazakhstan. It is only a matter of time before waves of Chinese migrants begin to appear in Kazakhstan. Growing Chinese military potential will soon begin to worry Astana even if at the moment it is seen as a counterbalance to US domination. Chinese Deputy Prime Minister Qian Qichen has said that China has resolved all territorial issues with Kazakhstan but that China objects to the US military presence in Kazakhstan.⁸⁷

Russia and Iran are equally unhappy with the US presence and its growing influence in Kazakhstan. This could create temporary frictions in the region, especially if Washington and Astana agree on the stationing of US troops or early warning radars on Kazakh soil.

Kazakhstan will continue to be targeted by international Islamic militants because of its Moslem majority, where the seeds of militantism could successfully grow if Kazakh economic development is not followed by corresponding social measures for the less fortunate part of the population. Terrorists could also target Western interests in Kazakhstan, such as diplomatic missions and oil interests.

Kazakhstan's ethnic melting pot may also bring future problems. Kazakhstan became a home for recent refugees from Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Chechnya and Afghanistan. The Uighur community in Kazakhstan is assessed at 300,000 although more radical members of the Uighur secessionist movement are occasionally expelled back to China.⁸⁸ China's pressure on its Uighur population living in the Xinjiang province will result in its increased migration to Kazakhstan. The tightly knit Chechen community will feel under moral pressure to help their militants to fight their hopeless war with the Russians. The Turkish government has already expressed its concern to the Kazakh government about the financial help given by the Chechen community in Kazakhstan to the organizers of the World Chechen Congress in Istanbul.⁸⁹

Kazakhstan's ethnic diversity and the increasing gap between the rich and the poor could lead to social tension, not experienced in Kazakhstan since 1989. The social problems can to some extent be blamed on the legacy of the Soviet Union, but not for long. The less fortunate, supported by younger officers in the Armed Forces, may soon begin to grumble.

Drug traffickers have been enormously successful in Kazakhstan. A border control system developed late and still far from efficient, low salaries of younger officers and NCOs in the armed forces and law enforcement bodies, and huge profits as the main motivating factor for smugglers and those who choose to look the other way, have increased the number of drug addicts and lowered the price of hard drugs in Kazakhstan. The number of officially registered drug addicts in Kazakhstan was, at

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the beginning of 2002, 26,000. The real number is said to be 250,000.⁹⁰ In 1998 the wholesale price of a kilogram of heroin in Kazakhstan oscillated between \$30,000 –50,000 per kilo. In mid 2002 the price was \$4,000-6,000.⁹¹ The number of cases of venereal disease grew more than 100 times between 1992 and 1998.⁹²

Having skilfully solved most of Kazakhstan's international problems President Nazarbayev can thus expect the most difficult challenges to be facing him at home.

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