

Lecture 3:
KAZAKHSTAN:
FROM EXPLOITATION TO NATIONHOOD IN CENTRAL ASIA

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1. Introduction: Troubled Histories

We won't have time to look at each of the Central Asian Republics in detail. We will focus today on **Kazakhstan**, since it is geographically the largest state in Central Asia (2.7 million square kilometres), and **potentially the most powerful in the comprehensive sense of national power** (though some would say that Uzbekistan might also emerge as a regional power, for possible leadership rivalries, see Zardykhan 2002, p168). This is based in part on a large resource base, on a diverse but comparatively well-educated population of over 15 million, and its central geographical position. For Central Asian states, **transformation to capitalist economies** participating fully in the world economy has been difficult, while **progress to a fully democratic society** has been problematic in Kazakhstan and largely reversed in Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

Kazakhstan is a procedural democracy, but the **concentration of power on the presidential office** has begun to undermine the emergence of strong opposition groups in the country, with presidential power being increased through 2006-2007 (see below). After a difficult transition period, the economy has begun to pick up in recent years through 2004-2004, with some stabilisation of real GDP growth of 8-9.5% for 2003-2006 (DFAT 2006). Using a number of criteria, **Kazakhstan is viewed as one of the more developed countries in the region**, with bank assets the third largest after Russia and the Ukraine (see Pomfret 2003; Saidazimova 2005). One view of the **prospects of the Kazakhstan economy** and its needs through 2006 is the following: -

Growth of inflation will proceed in admissible limits. In particular, on results of 2005 the estimation of inflation rates makes 7.4 %. In our opinion, in conditions of supporting high prices for hydrocarbon raw material in the world market, inflation in 2006 will make more than 7.4 %. Preservation of the given tendency can be also explained by a low level of competitiveness of a domestic production and preservation of the dependence on import of consumer goods.

Therefore the primary goal of 2006, in our opinion, should become acceptance of real measures on diversification Kazakhstan's economy and transfer of accents from its raw material sector on processing sector. In this plan the one of the main priorities of economic policy of the Republic should become development of branch clusters and creation of favorable conditions for functioning subjects of small

and medium sized businesses.(Galimovna 2006; later figures suggest inflation in the 6-8.5% range for 2003-2006, DFAT 2006)

The **Kazakh people** are one of the largest and most widely spread ethnic groups in 'Greater Central Asia'. As well as Kazakhstan, they have minority populations in Xinjiang province, Mongolia and Kyrgyzstan. In brief, the Kazakhs 'are a Turkic people, descendants of the nomadic tribes who settled the territory of present day Kazakhstan in the 6th century AD' (Gardiner-Garden 1995b, p36). **Their culture developed along the northern branch of the Silk Road.** Traditionally, they had been a semi-nomad people, living in *yurts* (carpet-lined mobile houses) and minding herds of animals. Like other Central Asia peoples, the Kazakhs are noted for their tradition of hospitality, which involves offering drink and food to guests, not asking direct questions, but perhaps engaging in *dastarkhan*, a humorous and polite conversation over a feast. **From the 15th century they formed the Kazakh Khanate, which existed as a unified state down to the early 17th century, but then broke up into smaller khanates** (Zardykhan 2002, p167). Although many Kazakhs still live in the countryside, others form major components of the city populations of the region. Since the 1930s the **nomadic life of the Kazakhs has been largely curtailed**, in part due to sensitivity to their crossing of international borders.



Map of Kazakhstan (Courtesy PCL Map Library)

From the sixteenth century, partly under the impact of the Mongols who controlled the region from the 13-15th centuries, they emerged as **three distinct tribal groupings** which still have political significance today: the **Great Horde** (Ulu Zhuz; southeast region), the **Middle Horde** (Orta Zhuz; central region); the **Little Horde** (Kishi Zhuz; north) (Gardiner-Garden 1995b, p36). During the Soviet period, if the Republic First Secretary was a Kazakh, he was usually from the Great Horde, while clan divisions have sometimes been translated into regional interests (Gardiner-Garden 1995b, p38). Although most urban Kazakhs may not know the full details of their tribal genealogy, continuing **patron-client relationships**, whereby different groups help each other, means that tribal affiliations still exist to a limited degree in the cities today (Esenova 1998). **Household networks and various forms of informal exchange** provided one of the main forms of 'social insurance' during the period of economic transformation

in the 1990s (Werner 1998). Today, **patronage among political and economic elites** remains a major social force bolstering the leadership of President Nazarbayev (see below).

Kazakhstan is **geographically the largest country** in Central Asia (as large as all of Western Europe), but much of this territory is arid desert, open steppes, or mountain terrain. It is for this reason that the region was chosen as one of the **main areas for Soviet nuclear testing, and for their main space launching facility**. The northern part of Kazakhstan tended to have a higher Russian population-ratio due to an extensive influx of Russians and Cossacks during the late 19th century, and during periods of Soviet agricultural development, especially from the 1960s.



Ethnic Russians in Newly Independent States, 1994 (Map Courtesy PCL Map Library)

During the 19th century perhaps a million Kazakhs died as the region was subjected to Russian, Cossack and Tartar immigration, and due to **failed revolts, famine and oppression** by the Russian army (Rashid 1994, p111). Some 250,000 also died in a failed revolt in 1916, with perhaps another million perishing during enforced collectivisation of farms (Gardiner-Garden 1995b, p36). From 1924, the Soviets sought to settle the nomadic Kazakh into a more static life-style around villages and later on collective farms, often hunting down those groups which refused to cooperate (Taheri 1989, p102).

The Republic as a whole was used by Stalin as a 'virgin dumping ground for ethnic groups whose loyalties were in doubt' (Rashid 1994, p107). These groups included **dozens of minorities**, including Germans, Chechens, Mesket Turks, Uzbeks, Tartars, Armenians, Koreans and others. The dominant groups as of 1991 were 40% Kazakhs, 38% Russians, 6% Germans, and 5% Ukrainians (Malik 1992b, p4). By the

mid-1990s these figures had changed to 42% Kazakhs and 36% Russians (Puri 1997, p347). By the year 2000 the population was **approximately 45% Kazakh and 35% Russian, with current estimates going as low as 30-32%** (DFAT 2006; Chipman 2006; for the complex relationship between ethnics divides and democratic stability, see Radnitz 2004). This population mix, due to **Russian out-migration** and the slightly higher birth rate of non-Russians, has tended to favour continued Kazakh dominance, leading to debates about citizenship and identity politics of the new country (see below). Ethnic and religious politics, though not reaching the scale of violence found in Uzbekistan or Tajikistan, are a major feature of Kazakh experience.

Resentment was also felt by many Kazakhs against the Soviet effort to suppress religion, particularly Islam, which had been viewed as a direct threat to the security of the southern borders of the USSR. In spite of numerous Soviet attempts to re-educate people away from religion, **Islam remained a strong cultural force in Kazakhstan**, in part as a form of resistance to Russian domination. Today, Kazakhstan is **more open to religious expression**, allowing the building of new mosques, *madrassah* (Islamic schools and colleges), and allowing people to go on the pilgrimage to Mecca, the *haj* (Akiner 2000, p99). At the same time, there is a strong effort by the government to **divide religion and state**, and to **exclude religious associations from politics** (see Tazmini 2001).

2. The Difficult-but-Necessary Relationship with Russia

Tensions between Kazakhs and Russians were intensified in the mid-1980s when the corrupt Kunayev regime (which seemed to have run government via an extensive network of family and tribally selected appointments) was replaced on Gorbachev's orders not by a Kazakh, but by an ethnic Chuvash from Russia, Gennady Kolbin. **In 1986 it seemed that *glasnost* (reform and political openness) was for Russians only.** Riots and demonstrations broke out on 17 December 1986, with some being killed and hundreds injured as police tried to control the situation.

Party elections in March 1989 saw **Nursultan Nazarbayev** (a member of the Great Horde, born 1940, also transliterated as Nazarbaev) take power, and then in direct elections confirmed as the national leader on 22 February 1990 (Rashid 1994, p117). On 26 October 1990, Kazakhstan became a sovereign state, but Nazarbayev was one of the leaders most keen on retaining some form of Union under Gorbachev's framework, and most suspicious of Yeltsin's drive for Russian autonomy (Akiner 2000, p94; Rashid 1994, p118). The events of the coupe against Gorbachev in late 1991, however, **forced Nazarbayev to accept that the USSR was at an end**, and that he would have to move to cooperate with the loose CIS arrangement suggested by Russia, Ukraine and Belarus. On 21 December 1991, at then capital of Kazakhstan, Alma Ata (also transliterated as Almaty), agreements were signed for the CIS and its joint control of nuclear weapons (Rashid 1994, p119; the capital through 1997-1998 was moved to the more centrally located city of Akmola).

After that time, **tensions with Russia** over price controls, monetary policies, and suggestions by Yeltsin of a review of borders, forced Nazarbayev to threaten to break away from CIS and reduce Russian influence regionally. In the end, **cooperative**

agreements were signed between Kazakhstan and Russia on regional security and joint use of the Baikonour cosmodrome, with a 2004 agreement allowing access to the launch facility through 2050 (Rashid 1994, pp119-120; Blagov 2005a). The border issue, with the desire of some nationalistic Russian and Cossack elements to incorporate parts of northern Kazakhstan (where the largest proportion of ethnic Russians had historically settled), remained heated through 1990-1991 (a view implicitly supported even by the writer Solzhenitsyn, 1991), but was defused thereafter, with a general agreement on borders made through CIS agreements. However, further debates on borders and energy resources across them continued through 2005, with **strong energy cooperation emerging between the two countries**: -

At the heart of the border deal lies an agreement for the joint development of the Caspian Sea's Imashevskoye natural gas field, Kazakhstan's second-largest natural gas field and an energy source once disputed by both Moscow and Astana. Kazakhstan had traditionally insisted on ownership of the gas condensate deposit, located along the border with Russia, but the agreement signed by Putin and Nazarbayev recognizes both countries as having equal rights to the field. The territory will be developed by the Russian energy giant GazProm and the Kazakhstani state oil company KazMunaiGaz. (Blagov 2005a)

Nonetheless, the **ethnic balance remained a very sensitive issue** for a number of reasons: -

- Ethnic Russians were previously a **technical elite** with distinct advantages in appointments and housing, especially in the cities.
- In the 1990s, **many ethnic Russians left** (perhaps peaking 1994, Gardiner-Garden 1995b, p37), due to indirect pressures and fears of future instability. Today Russians form about 30% of the population (DFAT 2006).
- Although some tensions could be eased by joint citizenship arrangements, or by having both Russian and Kazakh as national languages, it was very difficult for President Nazarbayev to ignore **strong nationalist feeling** on these issues. Thus it remains unclear whether the term 'Kazakh' is narrow ethnic term, or can be used to include all citizens of Kazakhstan (see Akiner 2000, p99; Sarsembayev 1999). Thus, for a time, nationalist feelings had to emphasise national identity at the expense of national unity: -

As a newly independent state, Kazakhstan embarked on an ambitious program of "Kazakhization" in 1991-1992, including promotion of ethnic Kazakhs in the government bureaucracy and promotion of Kazakh language education. This "Kazakhization" included a transmigration of Kazakhs into Slav-dominated territories from other areas, close monitoring of the Russian opposition, and tight control over the Russian media. Despite the dangers of such a policy, the government believes it will win in the long run and has succeeded in the short-run: emigration of Russians combined with immigration of Kazakhs and their relatively higher birth rates have shifted the demographic and power balance throughout the country and especially in the north. Kazakhstan also passed several language laws, including naming Kazakh the state language with Russian relegated to a secondary status as an 'official' language. Ethnic Kazakhs argue that such programs are necessary to rectify the legacies of 200 years of discrimination and forced Russification. Many Russians, bitter at the sudden shift of political power, initially feared that the language law, would be the first step in a strategy to destroy Russian identity and culture in Kazakhstan; while the language law is

slowly being implemented, these cultural fears and grievances have now largely subsided . . . The Russian language is still used as the language of business throughout most of the country and in many regional administrative units. However, while cultural grievances have subsided, economic grievances have grown, as ethnic Russians continue to demand greater opportunities and public funds for their communities (MAR 2004).

- At the same time, **Russians represent an educated and technical group** whose skills the new Kazakh state desperately needed in the early stage of re-developing the economy. Thus **Russian remains a major business language** for the country (MAR 2004).
- **Mistreatment of Russians remaining in Kazakhstan could result in a serious backlash from Russia**, either through indirect pressures, or even through threatened military intervention, which has not been ruled in Russian military doctrine and the foreign affairs policies which have emerged through 1993-2003 (at first under the special treatment of the 'near abroad', see weeks 1-2). Kazakhstan cannot afford major mistreatment of its large Russian minority.
- Ironically, **many second or third generation Russians in Kazakhstan felt themselves strongly attached to Kazakhstan**, and many had little desire to return to Russia. Likewise, many Kazakhs, especially those living in the cities, were educated in Russian (Gardiner-Garden 1995b, p37). It must be remembered that since 1958 the Soviets had made Russian a compulsory subject for schools throughout the USSR (Taheri 1989, p126). Over the last decade, there has been **a resurgence in Kazakh language, culture, and broadcasting**, as well as a strong interest in new international languages such as English.

These factors suggest that the ethnic issue had to be treated carefully. Nazarbayev rightly called it 'the thin rope stretched over an abyss' (in Gardiner-Garden 1995b, p37). Early signs of compromise were reached: for example, law stipulates that candidates for the presidency must have a knowledge of the Kazakh language, but need not be ethnically Kazakh (Gardiner-Garden 1995b, p37). However, the creation of '**a non-ethnic sense of Kazakhstan nationhood**' was slow to emerge, and was complicated by the clan divisions (the three hordes) which make the incorporation of outsiders difficult (Gardiner-Garden 1995b, p37). Although **Kazakh remains the official language** (DFAT 2006), there has also been some attempt to mollify Russians by **terming Russian as the official language of inter-ethnic communication**, though the effect of such a designation is far less than that of having official bilingualism, i.e. officially using two languages (as in the use of French and English in Canada).

These tensions have also been slightly exacerbated by old **religious tensions between Orthodox Christianity and Islam**. In 1988 Soviet leaders allowed the sumptuous celebration of Kiev's conversion to Christianity a thousand years before - a clear sign that Russia hoped to bolster support by tapping into Orthodox religiosity (Taheri 1989, p32, p211), and since that time there have been signs that Orthodox Christianity has been mobilised as part of a new patterns of Russian nationalism. In Central Asia, the building and attendance of mosque has risen through much of the entire region, and although most of these congregations are moderate, there are dangers that religious divisions could be used by extremist politicians. At present, **Kazakhstan**

has tried to steer towards the path of a secular government, allowing religion only a moderate private and civic space, and no political role (see below).

Furthermore, **though Kazakhstan has been relatively successful in drawing in foreign capital** (compared to other regional states), the moving away from the time when the entire economy of the region had been geared as part of the Soviet system. All major rail, road, air and pipeline routes headed north and west into Russia. Even as late as 1991 'inter-Republic' trade still accounted for 84% of total trade, which provided 34.2% of GDP (Dannreuther 1994, p20). **Today, trade has greatly diversified with regional states, to a small extent with the West (especially Germany, 7-11% around of overall trade), with China (21.4% of imports), but Russia still remains one of the major inputs and outputs** for the Kazakh economy: 11.3% of exports and 35.9% of imports in 2004 (DFAT 2006). Bilateral trade in 2004 reach \$7 billion (Blagov 2005a). In turn, **Kazakhstan has begun to invest regionally, and explore new deals** with countries such as Israel (access to the Baikonur Cosmodrome to launch mapping and reconnaissance satellites), new energy deals with Bulgaria and Romania, new relations with Georgia to allow transit access to the Black Sea, pipeline deals with China and efforts to draw in more Japanese investment (see Blank 2006).

Russia and Kazakhstan signed **military cooperation agreements** (1992, 1994), and in January 1995 signed a 'Declaration on Expanding and Deepening Russian-Kazakh Cooperation' which had strong implications on coordinating the two economies and foreign affairs policies (Gardiner-Garden 1995b, p38). **Military cooperation deepened through 2000-2006**, in part through the **SCO and the Collective Security Treaty Organization, the CSTO**. (see lecture 2) Areas of security cooperation are found in the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (see Kubicek 2004), e.g. **anti-terrorism measures through the SCO**; some rapid reaction exercises under the provisions of the CIS Collective Security Organisation in 2001 and 2002 (involving Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan); and new efforts to boost the CSTO through 2004-2006 (the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan). The latest round of CSTO war games were held in August 2006 in Kazakhstan and though 'officially tagged as part of a counter terrorism program' may be 'in direct response to US military threats in the region including the planned attacks against Iran' (Chossudovsky 2006).

However, Kazakhstan has also begun a **more independent policy in recent years**, including some cooperation with the US and purchasing some European air-defence systems, as well as begun building a **small but significant naval capacity** on the Caspian Sea: -

Moscow also has reservations concerning Kazakhstan's efforts to create its own naval forces in the Caspian Sea. Rather than seeking to rely upon Russia as a potential guarantor of its economic security in the Caspian, or pursue solutions and assistance through various CIS mechanisms, Astana has preferred to devise its naval requirements without taking into account Russian opposition. The Kazakhstani Navy will be, in addition to its maritime border-guard service, placed under the operational control of the National Security Service (KNB). The Ministry of Defense is attempting to create a functioning Navy that will include marines, coastal artillery, and a military flotilla and be equipped with a combination of battleships produced by domestic

defense plants and battleships received from Russia, Turkey, and several Western countries. In early July the first 17 graduates of the Naval Academy at Aktau completed their 22-month courses in ship mechanics, radio operations, and navigation. (Kazakh Television First Channel, Astana, July 4). The academy will also receive specialist assistance from the UK's Royal Navy in order to facilitate the further improvement and development of the academy in the future. (McDermott 2004)

Aside from energy cooperation and bilateral trade, economic regionalism has been somewhat slow, as indicated by the largely 'on-paper' agreement of the **CES, Common Economic Space**, which had been strongly supported by Russia, but which is now be limited by changes in Ukrainian politics: -

In at least one case, that of the four-nation the Common Economic Space (CES), recent developments in Ukraine have put the future of the grouping in doubt. The creation of the CES -- comprising Belarus, Kazakhstan, Russia and Ukraine -- was announced in early 2003. . . . Since then, the organization has been slow to take shape. Putin at his December 23 news conference said CES development efforts would proceed, but the desire of Ukraine's new leadership to cast Kyiv's economic lot with Russia appears limited. Representatives of Ukrainian President-elect Viktor Yushchenko have expressed a desire to continue discussions on the CES, without sounding enthusiastic about the economic possibilities. (Blagov 2005b)

Through 2003-2005, the **CES remained on a slow track**, in part because of a lack of dispute resolution procedures, a lack of a supra-national decision-making body, and due to Ukrainian concerns about excessive Russian influence (see Smbatian 2005).

The future prosperity of Kazakhstan and effectiveness to trade will be directly influenced by the **broader regional setting and building new regional ties**. This **need for wider economic integration** was already obvious by 1989: -

. . . the Silk Route which connected Europe with China via western and central Asia. The economies of Kazakhstan, Central Asia and Azarbaijan could develop closer ties with China, India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran, the Gulf states, Turkey and Egypt. It is only be reintegrating these economies into their natural habitat that future crises caused by overpopulation, lack of investment in resource development and the absence of adequate markets could be intelligently addressed. (Taheri 1989, p224).

Kazakhstan has a long, almost indefensible border with Russia, with a sizeable minority of approx 30%, with a concentrations of Russians in the north, and considerable Russian business activity in the country. **Kazakhstan has therefore tried to increase its leverage with Russia by making itself even more important to Russia economically and diplomatically (e.g. via SCO, CSTO, CES), while opening up to other major influences including PRC, US, and European countries (a multi-vectored approach)**. It was therefore generally been supportive of the Russian role in the CIS, was cooperative in agreements over nuclear weapons and the Baikonur space launch facility (receiving approximately \$115 million a year from Russia for its use down till early 2005), and was largely content to not cut Russian entirely out of lucrative oil-transit income (Olcott 1996). Moreover, just as continued oil production might make Kazakhstan the world's sixth largest producer in 2015, so in turn Russia has been keen to invest in the Kazakh energy sector, plus tried to secure transit deals through Russian territory down till 2020 (Blagov 2005a) Kazakhstan 'tries to present itself to Russia as a shield against drug-trafficking and Islamic extremism' (Zardykhan 2002, p172). **Kazakhstan has almost sought a 'symbiotic**

relationship' with Russia in order to ensure its future survival. At the same time, it has also been improving its diplomatic and economic relations with China, and has signed major deals for future Chinese investment in its energy sector, with the prospect of future eastward running pipelines, with once pipelines currently operative from eastern Kazakhstan (see below). Likewise, the **Kazakhstan also signed a military cooperation agreement with US in 2003**, which allowed for the supply of military equipment, and has allowed some joint training with US and NATO troops, though this has not led to any permanent bases (Leech 2006, p87). Kazakhstan may just possibly emerge as the **hub of a new Central Asian pattern of cooperation** that in the long term will recognise Russia's important place but not be dominated by Russian interests.

3. Nuclear Weapons, Nuclear Power and New Security Concerns

An issue which has pushed Kazakhstan into world prominence was the fact that after the break-up of the USSR, it retained some 104 SS-18 Satan ICBMs (intercontinental range ballistic missiles) on its territory, with more around 1,340 **strategic nuclear warheads** (tactical weapons had been removed, Rashid 1994, p109; Puri 1997, p247), as well as a small number of strategic bombers. Although under joint CIS command in the early 1990s, a program was put in place for the eventual disarmament and destruction of these weapons. However, President **Nazarbayev used the timetable of this arms control project as a means to extract concessions from Russia, and to express his concerns about the continued nuclear armament** of Russia, China and the US. Both Kazakhstan and the Ukraine **linked their disarmament policies to the broader issue of national security** - they would only guarantee to destroy their weapons if they received US aid to do this, and though both nations joined the START I arms reduction treaty, the completion of destruction of these weapons was not completed until after 2001.

However, **Kazakhstan remained a source of nuclear technology, materials, and technicians**, and there have been concerns that has some of this knowledge had been exported abroad to diverse countries, including possibly Iran, India and China. It is in this context, plus international pressure on Iran over its nuclear research program, that **Kazakhstan agreed in early 2004 to deepened and more intrusive inspections of its nuclear facilities**, via an additional protocol to its International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards agreement (Arms Control Today 2004). Likewise, in December 2004, Kazakhstan signed the international Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material, which 'provides a framework for international cooperation in protection, recovery and return of stolen nuclear material, as well as the application of criminal sanctions against anyone who commits criminal acts involving nuclear material' (UPI 2004a). However, the country has also decided to **expand its mining and business interests in nuclear power production through 2006-2007: -**

The country plans to increase uranium production by 31% in 2007, to 6937 tonnes, compared with output of 5279 tonnes in 2006, the Kazakh Energy and Mineral Resources Ministry announced.

Over the 2001-2005 period, Kazakh uranium production rose from 2000 to 4357 tonnes per year, and further mine development is underway with a view to annual production of 15,000 tonnes by 2010.

In July 2006, Russia and Kazakhstan (through Kazatomprom) signed three 50:50 nuclear joint venture agreements (JVs) totalling \$10 billion for new nuclear reactors, uranium production and enrichment. (WNN 2007)

With current concerns over green-house gas emissions and the rising demand for fossil fuels, the Ulba Metallurgical Plant (UMP), part of the Kazatomprom group hopes to **engage Kazakhstan in key stages of the global nuclear power industry**: -

The company aims to be involved in the entire front end of the nuclear fuel cycle, from uranium mining through to fuel assembly fabrication, as well as nuclear power plant construction. According to Nurlan Musin, Director General of UMP, the company "will become a full-pledged player among the world's nuclear power complex enterprises." (WNN 2007)

Kazakhstan **at first avoided alarming other countries by retaining only a modest national army**. Initially, this was based around a small national guard, and in 1992 by appointing the Russian Lieutenant-General Ryabtsev, commander of the Fortieth Army, to be the first Deputy Defence Minister (Rashid 1994, p120). Other forces in Kazakhstan were at first 'on loan' Russian units, and Kazakhstan gave relatively low priority to the development of its armed forces. There has been some increase of military and internal security spending from 1998, creating a **small but reasonably well-equipped army** (Chipman 1998, p150). From 2000-2001 Kazakhstan announced a **large military equipment purchasing budget**, much of this package to be acquired from Russia. Active armed forces as of 1999-2006 totalled 65,800, with 20,000 Internal Security troops (Chipman 2006). It has a small but **relatively modern airforce** using approximately 43 MiG31s, 40 MiG 29s and approximately 25 SU-27 fighter aircraft, as well as a number of MiG25s, and S-300 air defence missile systems (Chipman 2006; Chipman 1999; Chipman 2002; Chipman 2003; Chipman 2004; Zardykhan 2002, p173).

Today, a wider range of **new security issues**, e.g. massive environmental damage (see below), criminal organisations, perceptions of corruption which remained problematic through 2002-2006 (very high ratings in Transparency International's scale, Rasizade 2002, pp49-50; Leech 2006, p66), lack of transparency in many oil deals (Leech 2006, p67), border control problems, economic diversification under an energy-led economy, may be more important than traditional military threats. The country also developed a **paramilitary force of 34,500 troops, including internal security and border protection forces**, approximately 12,000 for border control, internal security troops of approximately 20,000, plus a presidential guard of 2000 and a government guard of 500 (Chipman 2006; Chipman 2002; Chipman 2003; Chipman 2004). In part this **strengthening of military and security forces was due to the threat of regional terrorism, increasing tensions in Afghanistan, and due to border tensions with Uzbekistan** that led to border guards clashing in early 2000, though by mid-2000 the border had begun to be clearly demarcated by bilateral diplomacy (see Zardykhan 2002, p170).

4. Ecological Disaster and Reconstruction

Soviet ideology and technology favoured the **engineering of the environment to suite the demands of a rapidly industrialising state** needing to catch up with the power of the West. This left a **legacy of ecological and health disasters** which represent a major cost component (in terms of human suffering as well as financial burdens) to the future development of the new states of in Central Asia. This is in stark contrast to indigenous local beliefs. Folk traditions in the region always treated rivers as almost sacred, e.g. the Amu Darya river. One Uzbek poet could joke 'When God loved us he gave us the Amu-Darya . . . And when he stopped loving us he sent us Russian engineers' (Taheri 1989, p174). In Kazakhstan, '24.2 billion tons of industrial and household waste left over from the days of the Soviet Union', including a total of up to 230 million tons of radio-active waste including irradiated testing sites, and the current government had offered from 2003 to import and store nuclear waste, though this was strongly opposed by local NGOs and seemed to stall through 2004 (UPI 2004b; NTI 2005; Kowalski 2005).

The **most visible of ecological disasters is that of the Aral Sea**, which has shrunk by more than two thirds after rivers feeding into it were depleted by **massive cotton irrigation schemes** over the last forty years. The result has been a destruction of natural fisheries, the Sea has shrunk to less than one third its original size, there has been massive salination of once fertile soil in the region, and various toxins and pesticides have concentrated in parts of the soil and water-table, leading to associated health problems (Sinnott 1992, p86). The Soviets had considered 'solving' this problem by the planning the Ob-Irtysh projection: the redirection of part of the great Siberian river the Ob through a 2,300 kilometre canal (it would be the longest in the world) into Central Asia. The plan had been to divert this river, and some others, to allow a further increase by 50% of irrigated lands in the Aral region by the year 2000 (Sinnott 1992, p85).

The ecological problem of this and other regions created opposition both within the scientific and intellectual groups of the Soviet Union. Even before Gorbachev's reforms were fully in place, **ecological activists** began to publicise and study the problem. In 1986 the Uzbekistan Writer's Union created the Committee for Saving the Aral, and reported on and studied the affected area in detail, as well as organising a bank fund for donations to help save the Aral Sea (Sinnott 1992, p91). During the period of reform under Gorbachev, the Ob River redirection project was put on hold due to the concerns of Russian environmentalists, and due to the enormous cost, at least 30 billion pounds (Taheri 1989, pp175-6). In 1986, the project was shelved, and instead there was a call for a 15-20% reduction of **water usage in the region**, and plans to modernise the existing irrigation network (Sinnott 1992, p85). The environmental disaster of the Aral is a regional problem of such severity that regional governments had agreed to put 1% of their GDP into a special Intergovernmental Fund (*Ecotan News* 1995a) to try to help reduce the damage caused.

It is difficult to see, however, how any quick solution can be found when all likely ones hinge on the need to reduce of river-water usage (for the difficult options, see

Sinnott 1992, pp91-94). Furthermore, there have been **ongoing tensions over water usage in the wider region**: -

The main disagreement between the upstream and downstream countries stems from the fact that the latter require water mostly in the time of cultivation for irrigation purposes, whereas Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan need water mainly for electric power production during the winter season, when their electricity consumption increases twofold. In addition, Uzbekistan frequently halts gas supplies to the upstream smaller countries during winters, making the heating problem most sensitive there. To survive in wintertime, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan have to increase the use of electric power generated by their hydropower stations by discharging water from their reservoirs. As a result, in summer, the reservoirs will not be able to deliver an adequate amount of water for irrigation in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. Uzbekistan, the world's fifth largest cotton producer, earns 75 per cent of all its hard currency from the export of cotton. Many experts believe that water-related tensions could partly be resolved if water were used more efficiently. Central Asia consumes 110 to 120 billion cubic metres of water annually, which is several times more than in the Middle East. The efficiency of irrigation systems here is low. An estimated 60 per cent of water is wasted due to irrational use and ineffective irrigation. In Uzbekistan alone, more than 20 billion cubic metres of water is wasted every year. This is the amount of water that Soviet planners intended to divert from the Irtysh river in Siberia to Central Asia to save the Aral Sea. (Rasizade 2002)

Despite **UNESCO and World Bank aid** to improve regional water usage, it seems unlikely that international aid has done more than slightly mitigate the side effects of the Aral Sea disaster, which is one of the planet's greatest ecological failures (see further Scharr 2001; Waltham & Sholji 2001). Today, the Sea has been split in two, with **plans to revive a smaller, more northern lake**, relying on agricultural improvements on the Syrdarya River, which has been diverted into northern section (see Waltham & Sholji 2001). **Long-term soil and health impacts have also made this an economic disaster**: -

People are forced to flee Central Asia because of land degradation, OSCE environmental chief Bernard Snoy said. Central Asia loses about \$2 billion, or 5 percent of the region's annual productivity, because of environmental damage to the land, according to the OSCE.

“Central Asia is an area of high concern,” Snoy said. “Since the bottom of the Aral Sea has been exposed, wind has blown salt across the land and reduced agricultural activity.”

The Aral Sea, once the world's fourth-biggest lake, is disappearing because its two sources, the rivers Amu Darya and Syr Darya, were diverted by the Soviet Union for irrigation. The Aral, which lies between southern Kazakhstan and northwestern Uzbekistan, is polluted by industry and farming and has become saltier as the water level has fallen. (Tirone 2007)

This is part of a **wider ecological crises with up to half of Central Asia suffering from severe land erosion or desertification**, with 66% of Kazakhstan and 80% of Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan suffering from various degrees of degradation (see Shadimetov 2007).

Kazakhstan has not only suffered from nuclear testing but from a **wider pattern of pollution**: in the northwest a huge coal power plant (Ekibastuz) has caused serious pollution, the large Lake Balkhash has been polluted by copper smelters, resulting in

virtual extinction of animal life in that area and in heavily polluted water supplies (Rashid 1994, p123), and it is fed by one of the most polluted rivers in Kazakhstan, the Ile, which receives 80 percent of its water from China (UPI 2004b). **Nuclear power and related pollution issues have also had an effect on internal politics** - a popular opposition movement was the Nevada-Semipalatinsk Movement ('Nevada' in abbreviation), was a 'Green' movement which became the basis of the People's Congress Party. Although an opposition group, Nazarbayev was friendly with the Nevada leadership (Rashid 1994, p122). Nazarbayev himself closed the Semipalatinsk testing site in August 1991, and arranged for compensation to be given to the victims of the Soviet testing programme (Rashid 1994, p124). It is against this background that we can see that **Kazakhs have become very environmentally conscious**. During June 1995, a series of seminars, sponsored by the government and the Ministry of Ecology and Bioresources, began to discuss the issue of sustainable development (*Ecostan News* 1995b). In this context, many Kazakhs also felt resentment over Chinese nuclear tests, just over the border, during the mid-1990s. Through 2002-2003 there were even concerns that in order to gain hard cash the country would import toxic nuclear waste from other countries, but the proposal came under hard public pressure through 2003-2004 (see Bennett 2003). However, **from 2003 an environmental protection tax has been levied**, and in 2004 this was more effectively spent on environmental projects, with some \$59 million allocated in the first half of 2004, though a total of 450 million is needed (UPI 2004b).

However, the realities of the newly independent state meant that the **country could not initially afford an entirely green development policy**, at least during the first decade. Until 1994 Kazakhstan still ran a small fast-breeder reactor (a BN-350 = a Dmitrovgrad-350), with scientific support from Russia, which supplied around 10% of Kazakhstan's electricity as well as desalinating sea water (Ivanov 1995). A 'small nuclear plant at Aktau was closed down in late 1999', while there was one plan for a new nuclear power station to be built near Lake Balkash, with three units of 640 MW each scheduled to be operational between 2005 and 2012', thereby supplying 'Almaty and export power to China and other Central Asian neighbours' (*APS Review Downstream Trends* 2002). Two thirds of the country's power is based on coal-fired plants, with hydroelectric power being little developed (see *APS Review Downstream Trends* 2002). Likewise, Kazakhstan mines and refines reactor grade uranium, which it exports (Ivanov 1995). Kazakhstan has also entered into scientific and trade programs with India for the peaceful development of nuclear power (Puri 1997, p247-248). **Through 2006-2007 the country has begun developing and expanding its nuclear power industry** in conjunction with Russian investment (see above).

5. Kazakhstan: A Central Asian 'Tiger'?

Kazakhstan has an extremely **strong resource base**, though this was inefficiently managed by the Soviet Union, and there was general underinvestment in the region during the 1980s (Taheri 1989, p175). **Natural resources include iron ore, coal, gold, silver, chrome, zinc, cadmium, beryllium, copper, manganese and uranium** (Rashid 1994, p125), as well as **nickel and bauxite, gas and oil**. These resources made Kazakhstan an integral part of the Soviet economy during the 1980s.

Kazakhstan also has **considerable untapped oil reserves along the Caspian Sea**, estimated as greater than Kuwait's, though through the early 1990s only relatively small amounts have been shipped into the world market, largely having to rely on pipelines through Russia to Novorossiysk on the Black Sea. In 1993, Chevron and the Kazakh National Oil Company signed a \$20 billion deal to develop the huge Tengiz oil field, edge of northeast Caspian Sea (Laird 1994, p19). Other oil and gas reserves are being developed by British and Italian companies in eastern Kazakhstan (Rashid 1994, p127), while Exxon-Mobil, ConocoPhillips, Inpex, Agip, British Gas, Shell, Total, British Petroleum and StatOil have searching for oil deposits and producing oil in other parts of the Caspian Sea including the huge Kashagan field for more than the last decade (Laird 1994, p19; see Forsythe 1996; Leech 2006, p63). Since this time, large amounts of Russian investment have also flowed into the country, in part to develop resources along shared borders.

Yet getting the oil out of Kazakhstan onto the world market has been difficult, and to date **Kazakhstan has had to largely rely on Russian pipelines** with attendant profit sharing with Russia, with new pipelines also being added to the route to Novorossiysk on the Black Sea (Leech 2006, p63). Although other routes have been discussed via Iran, Turkey and eventually eastward into China (see Spector 2001), the cost involved remained high (Olcott 1996), though pipelines via Turkey and into China have become partially operational through 2005-2007. Indeed, some have suggested that the relative costs and political risks involved mean that the so-called oil boom in the region is a 'myth' (see Jaffe & Maning 1998; Rasizade 2002). **Politics as much as money is shaping the direction of these pipelines: -**

Among the major issues where the Bush administration has to handle the Clinton legacy, are the Caspian area energy policy and the concomitant pipeline projects. The [US] State Department invested heavily in grandiose strategies that have pressed the Caspian countries and international consortia operating in the region to export their oil and gas westward through pipelines that would terminate in Turkey. These costly projects, the Baku-Ceyhan oil pipeline and the trans-Caspian gas pipeline from Turkmenistan, never made obvious economic sense.

The Department of State, nonetheless, has been a staunch advocate of both projects and pressed the leaders of Turkey, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan to sign a package of legal framework agreements in Istanbul in 1999 under American auspices. The plan's strategic objective was twofold: to reduce Russian's political influence in the Caucasus by pushing it out of the Caspian Sea and further isolate Iran in the region (Rasizade 2002, p37).

Controversy raged over these different projects through 2001-2005, with some suggesting that the real cost of the Baku-Ceyhan pipeline was closer to US\$4 billion than the early estimate of US\$2.4 billion - this compares to new Russian pipelines to Novorossiysk for US\$2.5 billion and a pipeline through Iran to the Persian gulf at around US\$1 billion (Rasizade 2002, p41). These costs, of course, do not factor in **political and security risks**, nor wider geostrategic issues such as ongoing U.S. tensions with Iran. New Russian pipelines to northern Kazakhstan oil fields have begun to increase exports from the region (Rasizade 2002, p42). Small amounts of Kazakh crude are also sent to Iran via the port of Neka on the Caspian sea, with an oil swap allowing exported crude from Kharg Island on the Persian Gulf to be swapped in value (Rasizade 2002, p44). Meanwhile, in spite of concerns about how much oil will

actually flow through the pipeline due to other routes, through October 2004 the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) pipeline was 75% complete: -

The \$3.6 billion pipeline will stretch 1,762 kilometers, including 443 km through Azerbaijan, 248 km through Georgia and 1,076 km through Turkey, and will have a capacity of 50 million tons of oil per year. Construction work should be completed in the first quarter 2005 and Azerbaijani oil will be exported from the port of Ceyhan in the second quarter 2005. (*Pipeline & Gas Journal* 2004)

Through early 2006 this project was **completed and oil began to flow** through this long pipeline, reducing dependence on Russian pipelines regionally.

The Caspian Sea region has **large amounts of oil and gas, but actual estimates vary greatly**. Some would say that potential reserves are as high as 200 billion barrels of oil, though other sources speak of 20-30 billion barrels of 'proven reserves' (Forsythe 1996, p6; Jaffe & Maning 1998; Rasizade 2002, p37). **This makes access to this oil an international and strategic issue**. The 'stakes involved, however, remain unchanged - power, influence, security and wealth' (Forsythe 1996, p6). Oil is likely to become an **even more important issue** in the future if gaps between world production and demand narrows (Forsythe 1996, p7, p18; Kleveman 2003) over the next ten years, and as East Asian nations, including China, begin to import more oil and gas. In fact, the issue of the route for gas and oil pipelines, whether through Russia, Armenia, Georgia, Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan or Pakistan has resulted in a complex major international game of push and shove. The U.S., in particular, opposed any routes through Iran, and would also like more routes independent of Russian control, though it is otherwise willing to aid investment and technology transfer of this sort to the region (see Forsythe 1996, pp18-20 for American policies). Iran, of course, is eager for joint development and is willing to host pipelines through its territory as part of its attempt to revive regional trade (Forsythe 1996, p24). Russia, in turn, has used this issue to gain more leverage on the oil share it can extract from the **Caspian Sea**, but had been beset by the fact that some oil pipelines have passed through problem areas such as Chechnya (some of these pipelines have been redirected). **Tensions over legal control of resources** has continued, with major negotiations ongoing through 2002-2006 failing to reach a comprehensive settlement on how to divide up resources of the Caspian (based on whether it should follow UNCLOS conventions on sea resources, be viewed as an internal lake, or whether a deal based on historical development could be reached). Russia improved its bilateral agreements with Azerbaijan from 2001 and Kazakhstan on resource development through mid-2005, with Iran still feeling it has received less than its fair share of resources (see Blagov 2005; Spector 2001; Katen 2006).

One of the latest moves in this 'oil-diplomacy' has been a **Chinese interests**, with an initial proposal of a \$4.4 billion understanding with Kazakhstan 'to build pipelines to China and Iran in exchange for oil and gas concessions and a 51% stake in Kazakhstan's state-controlled oil-production company' (Jaffe & Manning 1998, p124). Over a twenty year period up to US\$3.16 billion could go to Kazakhstan in local taxes and excise duties, making the entire package worth a total of around US\$9.5 billion (Zardykhan 2002, p176). A great deal of Central Asian regional trade also flows into the Xinjiang region of China, amounting to around US\$2 billion as early as 1992 (Zardykhan 2002, p177). However, questions have been raised about the

ability to build these long pipelines, and whether China can effectively put together enough investment for such projects. As we have seen, oil and gas pipelines out of Siberia are more likely short-term projects into either northern China or to Japanese markets. **However, Chinese interest in Central Asian energy has received a boost through 2003-2005: -**

China has pursued Kazakhstan's oilfields for many months. In March 2003, a Chinese company pledged \$615 million to British Gas for roughly eight percent of the Kashagan oilfield, in the Kazakhstan section of the Caspian Sea. Four other shareholders, all energy giants, exercised their preemptive right to buy the shares. Five months later, China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) acquired 35 percent of the North Buzachi oilfield from Saudi oil company Nimir Petroleum. Later CNPC took full control of the field by buying the remaining shares from ChevronTexaco, which has tussled with Kazakhstan's government. . . .

Some see China's exploration as a means of preparing for the pipeline. A pipeline, which could cost \$850 million, would need protection and production guarantees. It could also deliver, according to some estimates, as much as 20 million tons of oil per year. In this light, it is easy to understand why Beijing would intensify exploration activities and seek to tie up resources in Kazakhstan. (Alibekov 2004)

One section **970 km section of the pipeline linking east Kazakhstan and western China** was begun in September 2004, (Xinhua 2004) and good progress on this project was made through 2005. In the long-term PRC hopes to created an integrated energy network across Central Asia, involving both Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan that would provide energy security for its western China development projects over the next fifty years. Although there are **fears within Kazakhstan that PRC might become too influential in the local economy, this energy trade is likely to be boosted through 2007-2010: -**

Despite the growing resentment over Chinese expansion, Kazakhstan recognizes the vital importance of economic, political and military partnership with Beijing. As of December 1, 1,8 million tons of Kazakh oil was reported to have been pumped to China through the Atasu-Alashankou oil pipeline put into operation on December 15, 2005. By 2010, oil deliveries to China are expected to increase up to 20 million tons annually. Kazakhstan is considering the construction of the second phase of an oil pipeline to China, linking the Kumkol oil fields with Atasu, as well as a gas pipeline to the Xinjiang Autonomous Republic. Other projects include the railway link from Kazakhstan to China through the Khorgos border trade zone, in addition to the existing railway route between Chinese Alashankou and Druzhba on Kazakh territory. The trade volume by the end of 2006 reached \$8 billion. (Yermujkanov 2007)

Until recently, **Kazakhstan still relied strongly on Russian pipelines**, and President Nazarbayev has warned the West of the danger of isolating Russia. In December 1999, Nazarbayev also told reporters 'that his country was supporting construction of the CPC, a major oil pipeline between Tengiz in Kazakhstan and Novorossiysk, Russia's port on the Black Sea.' (*Xinhua News Agency*, 1999) Through 2000-2004, oil wealth, began to **boost national economy**, with GDP growth rates of over 8-9.5% through 2000-2006 (DFAT 2006). However, this **growth is highly reliant on energy exports**, even though royalties are relatively low at between 2-6% a barrel (see Leech 2006, p62). Along with foreign investment into the energy sector, these factors may lead to an overly strong currency (the Tenge) that **might undermine manufacturing and agricultural exports** (see Nurskenova 2004). Likewise, Kazakhstan seems to have intensified energy cooperation with Russia through 2003-2006, perhaps because President Putin has been less critical of limits to democratisation than the EU and the United States in recent years.

The country also has **moderate to strong agricultural potentials**. It has the ability to produce **grain exports** - a bumper crop in 1992 of 32 million tonnes was largely sold to Russia in exchange for needed machinery and spare parts (Rashid 1994, p129). The country has a range of **other agricultural exports, including the production of cotton, wool and meat**. As Kazakhstan develops its **accession process to the World Trade Organization (WTO) through 2004-2006**, it also need to ensure a more competitive agricultural sector. Some 43% of population live in the countryside, but 33% of these live in poverty (Nurskenova 2004). On this basis, the government has sought to **deepen investment into infrastructure and services in the rural areas** through 2003-2006, with \$204 million going to roads, hospitals, schools and irrigation, and \$1 billion on new storage facilities, processing plants, machinery and technologies. Land reform, allowing citizens to sell or lease land for up to 49 years, has also been important, though privatisation of land has been relatively slow (Nurskenova 2004). However, 2-3% of GDP may be needed to invest in alternative economic development to avoid continued over-reliance on energy exports (Nurskenova 2004). Likewise, environmental damage and uneven water access undermine agriculture in the drier parts of the country.

These factors have led to the **projection of Kazakhstan as a new Asian tiger** so long as the country remains stable (Rashid 1994, p127). International confidence in Kazakhstan had been expressed by an early loan from International Monetary Fund (IMF), a \$1.2 billion loan spread over 3 years in the early 1990s - a very large investment bearing in mind the small population of Kazakhstan, and considerably larger than the funds then allocated to Uzbekistan by the IMF and World Bank. By the 1994-1998, the World Bank had arranged some 16 loans for structural readjustment, including road, legal and health care developments, totalling some \$1.6 billion (*ITAR/TASS* 1998). In 1999, the World Bank decided to grant a further loan of approximately \$140 million for the modernisation of the national electric power transmission network (*ITAR/TASS* 1999). From 1999, **Kazakhstan's currency, the tenge**, remained relatively stable, and the inflation rate dropped to stable levels from 2001-2004, in the order of 6-8.4% (*ITAR/TASS* 2000; DFAT 2004). Some 60 US companies, as well as European and East Asian interests, have opened offices in Alma Ata, including Chevron, Mobile, Citibank, Chase Manhattan, and Price Waterhouse (Laird 1994, p18). From 1998-1999, government budgeting seemed realistic and the country's economy generally stable (*ITAR/TASS* 1998). The year 2000 saw a solid 14.6% rise in industrial output and GDP (DFAT 2003; *Times of Central Asia* 2001), with the government hoping to sustain growth for the next several years at around 8%. These factors suggest **the country is finding its place in the regional and global economy, but may be too reliant on energy exports**, while UNDP reports from 2004 suggest that **local poverty and poor health care persists** even in oil producing regions, suggesting **problems in diversification in the economy** (Kimmage 2005; Leech 2006, pp64-65).

6. Models of Political Development

Yet a range of **challenges remain**. Though the political system has liberalised within Kazakhstan, with a somewhat **more open press** (though this may be affected by a new

media law which strengthens the information Ministry's rights, see Pannier 2004) and less overt operation of a police state, **political problems remain**. President Nazarbayev has been an effective international leader, but he has also attempted to shape the current, formally democratic system in his favour. In the March 1994 elections for the new Parliament, he effectively nominated many parliamentarians and vetted the rest (Gardiner-Garden 1995b, p39). Furthermore, Nazarbayev, through contacts with opposition groups, has sought to lift the position of President to a point where it is in some sense above multiparty politics. The less benign aspect of this has been a **tendency to manipulate the electoral system** to enhance the power of the presidency. From the mid-1990s the President seems to have sought to limit the independence of the parliament and enhance the powers of the presidency (Gardiner-Garden 1995b, p39).

The political system in Kazakhstan needs further opening, and there is the danger that 'big man' government could deepen and make more violent the current opposition. The September 1995 elections **reinforced presidential powers**, and increased his term of office till the year 2000. Likewise, the 1999 presidential elections, though in theory open and leading to Nazarbayev's re-election (Akiner 2000, p94), were controlled by being called early with little preparation time, and with the main opponent, former Prime Minister Akezhan Kazhegeldin being fired and then harassed by internal security laws. In effect, President Nazarbayev has given 'his rivals no chance to put a serious challenge.' (Radyuhin 1999). Indeed, it is difficult for new parties to register without government support (Akiner 2000, p102). Although criticised by the U.S. and other Western nations, the OSCE (Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe) and by the Human Rights Watch group, Nazarbayev has received support from Russia for his control of ethnic tensions in the country (Radyuhin 1999; Akiner 2000, p112).

Internal **censorship** certainly has been reduced since 1991, with a UNESCO conference in October 1992 issuing the *Declaration of Alma Ata on Promoting Independent and Pluralistic Asian Media*, suggesting a range of mechanisms to protect journalists and help ensure freedom of the press in Central Asia. In Kazakhstan, **independent media has come under various pressures**, ranging from harassment through to sudden tax inspections and fines, sometimes resulting in a level of self-censorship that limits the expression of opposition ideas (Akiner 2000, p105). As recently as late 2002 prominent 'Kazakh opposition journalist Sergey Duvanov has been sentenced to three and a half years in prison . . . in a case that has been characterized by human rights and opposition groups as politically motivated' (Dyussebayev 2003). Word of mouth through clan networks, called in Kazakh the 'long ear' (*uzun qulaq*), however, means that critical information still does flow through the country (Akiner 2000, p106).

Problems within Kazakhstan's government continued in January 2002, with the sudden and unexplained resignation of the Prime Minister Tokayev (Nurshayeva 2002; DFAT 2003). **Opposition parties** such as the Communist Party and the United Democratic Party have not yet been able to undermine the President's power, but from late 2001 a **new movement, Democratic Choice, has been active**, with major rallies held in January 2002. Democratic Choice, which includes a number of former government officials, made a raft of reform demands, including 'a more powerful

parliament, the reform of the judiciary, a free press and television, and the election of regional governors and mayors (now appointed by the president)' (*Economist* 2002, p64; *Eurasia Insight* 2002). Through late 2003 there have been efforts to create sustained opposition via the People's Party of Democratic Choice of Kazakhstan (DBK), though official registration of the party has been problematic: -

Kazakhstan's 2002 election law obligates political parties to certify at least 50,000 members representing all regions and major cities of the country. The DBK claims around 32,000 members -- 10,000 of which are members of other parties. Starting from a real base of 22,000 members, political observers say it is feasible the DBK could gather the requisite 50,000 members. (Blua 2003)

At best, this is a form of **managed democracy**, at worst **cloaked or 'soft' authoritarianism**. **Presidential powers** at present include the right to rule by decree, to declare a state of emergency, and to dissolve parliament under certain conditions (Akiner 2000, p109). There are also rumours that Nazarbayev's eldest daughter, Dariga Nazarbaeva, may be being groomed for a future political role, as indicated through October 2003, by the transformation of her public association Asar (Mutual Help) into a political party (Akiner 2000, p117; Blua 2003), though the party did not perform very well in parliamentary 2004 elections (Kimmage 2005). The **small and medium business sector has also come into play as a political force**, at least to a limited degree, from 2003: -

The Ak Zhol party, which seeks to gain seats in the next parliament, speaks on behalf of Kazakhstan's businesses. Many of its potential voters own or manage private enterprises. Since Ak Zhol (which means Bright Road) has attracted a milder strain of reformist than the Democratic Choice of Kazakhstan, observers say, Nazarbayev hopes to sew up its members' loyalty in any broad fight. (Kusainov 2003)

In September 2004, the President and his Otan Party retain a 'strong majority' the lower chamber of parliament (the Mazhilis), though the elections were protested as unfair by the opposition and viewed critically by the OSCE (Kimmage 2005). Likewise, opposition forces were already beginning to position themselves for the next **presidential elections**, with some members of the old political elite willing to consider joining the opposition: -

Precisely because many of their leaders are now wealthy, these new opposition movements do not need financial assistance from abroad, unlike in other Central Asian countries.

"The opposition in Kazakhstan today is first of all represented in parties like Ak Zhol. These are the young wolves bred and nurtured within Nazarbaev's regime. Now, they are demanding their piece of political power. They have already gotten their economic strength, but now they are determined to assert their interests on a legitimate political level," Dubnov says.

Dubnov says the new Kazakh parties can support themselves without any dependence on grants from abroad and they have already achieved significant political influence.

The Kazakh opposition movement received another boost this week when former parliament speaker Zharmakhan Tuyakbai announced that he is joining the Coalition of Democratic Forces. That grouping unites the major opposition groups such as Ak Zhol, Democratic Choice for Kazakhstan, and Communist parties.

Tuyakbai said his decision was prompted by disagreement with recent presidential policies. But he is not the only high-level official to have recently joined the opposition.

Akezhan Kazhegeldin, who was former prime minister from 1994 to 1997, wrote an open letter to the country's opposition movements in October, appealing for a unified platform to take on Nazarbaev in the . . . elections. (Krastev 2004)

It remains to be seen, however, whether the strong economy, **regime support** from Russia and political elites, plus the limited space for civil society, critical media and opposition parties, will allow a strongly and fair future elections. The President promised in late 2004 to **open up sectors of the economy for greater participation**, perhaps to blunt opposition forces: -

In a speech delivered at the newly elected parliament's opening session on November 3, Nazarbayev depicted the oligarchs as intent on monopolizing the economy and squashing all competitors. "About 10 mega-holdings . . . control more than 80 percent of the Kazakhstani economy," the president said. "They, as a rule, are against the appearance of competitors. That is why they are obstacles for the development of small and mid-size business." Among the conglomerates identified as stifling development are some of the nation's leading banks, the state oil and gas company KazMunaiGaz, and the Eurasian Industrial Association. Another conglomerate labeled as a mega-holding was the Khabar media empire, which is run by the president's daughter, Dariga Nazarbayeva.

Criticisms leveled by the president against conglomerates ranged from tax evasion to the mishandling of investor relations. As a result, Nazarbayev contended, Kazakhstan's stock market has failed to meet its potential. To correct the situation, the president has suggested that conglomerates shed some of their non-core holdings. He additionally proposed that an undefined number of state holdings be created to include "strategically important and big state companies." Other firms may be put up for auction.

Critics say Nazarbayev's stated aim ensuring the economic sector is open to greater competition is disingenuous. They point out that many of the president's family members, friends and political associates possess vast business holdings, but they do not seem to be the primary targets of the anti-oligarch campaign. The real aim of the campaign, critics assert, is to deny opposition parties the financial ability to compete in the upcoming presidential election Nazarbayev has indicated he will seek another seven-year term. (Alibekov 2004)

Elections held in December 2005 showed leadership stability but also confirmed some of these problems. The current president received "91 percent of the vote. His leading challenger, Zharmakhan Tuyakbai of the opposition bloc For a Just Kazakhstan, garnered a mere 6.6 percent. The commission put turnout at 6.7 million, or 75 percent of those registered." (Kimmage 2005b). Though the CIS viewed the elections as fair, the OSCE and related observer groups (OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), the Parliamentary Assemblies of the OSCE and Council of Europe, and the European Parliament) felt that there were **pressures that made competitive elections problematic:** -

While candidate registration was mostly inclusive and gave voters a choice, undue restrictions on campaigning, harassment of campaign staff and persistent and numerous cases of intimidation by the authorities, limited the possibility for a meaningful competition. (OSCE 2005)

Through **2006-2007 these trends for concentration of power in the hands of the President and his supporters** continued. Thus in January 2007 the Prime Minister, Daniel Akhmetov suddenly resigned, being replaced by Karim Masimov. Likewise, Nazarbayev has also sought from late 2006 to integrate support parties: -

On December 22, the pro-presidential Civic Party and Agrarian Party voted to join President Nursultan Nazarbayev's Otan Party. Another pro-presidential party, Dariga Nazarbayeva's Asar Party, made a similar decision earlier in the year. These developments highlight several important dynamics in Kazakhstan's political system. First, it is a major shift in strategy for these parties and the interests they represent. Second, it is a significant change in Kazakhstan's political development from a managed opposition model, to a single-party system. Finally, it re-enforces Nazarbayev's dominance in Kazakhstan's politics, and may give a preview of how the succession issue will be managed. (Kennedy 2007)

These moves may have been designed to ensure that Akhmetov did not become too popular, as well as a way of **driving through new policies and shaping future transition**: -

Addressing parliament on January 10, Nazarbayev outlined his priorities for the new government: to pursue his pet project of making Kazakhstan one of the world's 50 most competitive countries, continue administrative reform, improve state and budget planning, develop the regions, boost the pension system, continue the focus on macroeconomic policy, train a competitive work force, improve infrastructure, bring the best of corporate management into the running of the state and diversify the economy. . .

The change of government should be viewed as part of wider intrigues. Nazarbayev was not necessarily dissatisfied with the Akhmetov cabinet's performance. It was perhaps more a move driven by the needs of the moment: the president wants to shore up the executive – in much the same manner that he strengthened the legislative branch by vastly expanding the presidential party -- as he enters a key phase of what is expected to be his last term in office.

Nazarbayev aims to ensure that when the presidential succession does occur, it takes place in an orderly manner, and follows the course he desires. Indeed, even while they continue to maneuver around the president, all the interest groups are keen to promote a stable transfer of power. The fall of the government and the change of senate leadership should be viewed in the context of maneuverings to secure the post-Nazarbayev era. (Lillis 2007)

To date, **Kazakhstan has avoided the more intense internal and transnational conflicts** of Tajikistan, the Ferghana valley, and Uzbekistan, and has not suffered from civil war or widespread violence. In part, Nazarbayev might claim to be following the 'Chinese model', i.e. **economic reform before complete political liberalisation**. He also holds a unique position as a former member of the old Communist elite, now a leading politician and member of the dominant clan group, the 'Golden Horde'. In future, however, he will need to ensure **that all groups get some rewards from his country's economic growth, as well as allow some gradual political opening** if he is to sustain relations with the EU and the US in the long term. Otherwise, there is no guarantee that Kazakhstan will emerge as a wealthy, independent and stable state.

Kazakhstan, though now with a growing economy and an apparently strong leadership, does share some of the general problems of Central Asia: -

Nevertheless, these regimes share certain similarities, including: (1) the remaining post-Soviet authoritarian rulers are aging, and the succession to them is unclear; (2) corruption is so pervasive in each of these regimes that economic development has been stunted; (3) much of the population in these countries - especially the large proportion engaged in cotton production - lives in poverty; and (4) disaffection is growing over how these regimes serve to enrich the elite at the expense of the general population. (Katz 2006).

The question we can now ask is how Kazakhstan will manage its **development in the next decade**. Are there key priorities which it will need to deal with before it can make use of its potential wealth and strong geostrategic position? Will it find a solution to the oil-access problem? Will it be able to meet both Western and Russian concerns? Will continued economic growth soften political tensions? Here, Kazakhstan's hope of following a truly '**multi-vector**' **foreign policy**, engaging a range of different partners for sustained development, will be a difficult balancing act. Indeed, the multivector approach could become a problematic game of compromise: -

The basic rules of the "multivector" game, as played in the southeastern arc of Central Asia, have now emerged: cooperation with Russia and China premised on a common acceptance of authoritarian political practice and driven by economic interests, often in the energy sector; cooperation with the West, primarily the United States, premised on the primacy of security concerns and driven by common opposition to Islamic extremism; and just enough tension between the big outside players to let the smaller Central Asian players extract concessions with the occasional move to and fro. (Kimmage 2004)

Through 2005 to early 2006 Kazakhstan has **managed some but not all of these challenges**: -

Nazarbaev has already proved himself adept at the "multivector" diplomacy required to balance relations with Russia, China, and the West, and while the next stage will surely test his skills, not only is there every reason to believe that he is up to the task, his dominant position in Kazakh politics will likely ease it for him. The same cannot be said about another energy-sector task -- ensuring that the country's oil potential is used to encourage economic diversification with an eye to including as broad a swath of the population as possible in the windfall. A competitive and representative political arena would create natural pressures for taking such steps. An all-powerful president who faces no competitors of comparable stature, oversees a pliant legislature, and personally controls the appointment of virtually all top officials may certainly take the same steps. But with benevolence the only guarantee that he will do so, the unquestioned leader may just as easily end up atop a pyramid of patronage, with the issue of succession gradually eclipsing long-promised political reforms as he moves into his twilight years. (Kimmage 2005b)

Kazakhstan seems to be combining a **path of privatisation and capital investment with the traditional rule by a dominant leader** who has a direct connection with the largest indigenous segment, the Great Horde. At the same time, the President has made some limited concessions to moderate opposition parties, while keeping strong control of central government, the dominant Otan party, and retains clear electoral dominance. This model may be stable for the interim, but needs strong cooperation from nearby states, and continued success in stabilizing the economy. This means that Kazakhstan needs to maintain friendly relations with great powers such as Russia and China, as well with regional actors such as Uzbekistan, Turkey, Iran and Pakistan. In part, this cooperation has begun with the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (see

Gleason 2001; Misra 2001), which has improved relations among Kazakhstan, Russia, and China, as well as sought greater stability in greater Central Asia. In large part, **Kazakhstan seeks to balance Russian and Chinese influences** through wider patterns of regional cooperation developed by the EU, the US and Japan over recent years (Zardykhan 2002, p180; see later lectures), but through 2003-2007 has begun to tilt towards a range of greater security and energy cooperation with China and Russia (see lecture 2). Kazakhstan has also expressed interest in closer relations with the European Union, APEC, and ASEAN, but these are long-term agenda. Kazakhstan has also engaged in limited security cooperation with the U.S. and NATO (see Zardykhan 2002, p173), still a controversial issue in the region. It is in this setting that **Kazakhstan has made a bid for chairmanship of the OSCE (Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe) in 2009** (Lillis 2007), which if successful would indicate a high degree of regional acceptance for the country as a legitimate middle power in the region, as well as a shift of the OSCE agenda towards security rather than democracy issues (Kimmage 2006).

Kazakhstan is literally the heart of Greater Central Asia and in many ways the key for future development of Eurasia. Its development remains crucial for the entire region, even if it is not a secure political model for the region as a whole.

7. Bibliography and Further Resources

Resources

The *Kazakhstan Institute for Strategic Studies* has a wide range of useful information and government policies updates at <http://www.kisi.kz/site.html?en=1>

The *Central Asia - Caucasus Analyst* provides a range of useful news and analysis via <http://www.cacianalyst.org/>

Useful headline stories on Central Asia and Kazakhstan will be found at *Transitions Online*, located at <http://www.tol.cz/>

Eurasianet has a good range of sources on Russia and Central Asia, including *Eurasia Insight*, a series of good analysis pieces. Access via <http://www.eurasianet.org/>

Voluntary Further Reading. If you would like to explore these topics further, see: -

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