

# **DOCUMENTI IAI**

## **KAZAKHSTAN**

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Conference report based on presentations and interventions at the seminar on Kazakhstan,  
Castelgandolfo, 29 April 1994

IAI9407

**ISTITUTO AFFARI INTERNAZIONALI**

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### **HISTORICAL LEGITIMACY OF THE KAZAKH STATE**

A brief introduction to the topic looked at two opposite points of view. On the one hand, Kazakhstan has no historical legitimacy but for the last two and a half years; on the other, it has legitimacy through the historical experience of its Kazakh population. There is a newly independent state that is called today Kazakhstan, that has declared sovereignty in October 1990, independence in December 1991, and got a seat at the UN in March 1992. It has all the attributes of a modern state: an elected president, a new parliament, a constitution, a flag, a new currency, a busy diplomatic life in its capital, Almaty.

Can one talk about a nation-state even if the titular nationals, that is the Kazakhs, are no more than the first ethnic minority of the country (about 40% of the 17 million inhabitants)? Before the Russian involvement, this huge territory was not even named Kazakhstan. This nation-state was artificially created by the Soviet administration in the structure we see now between 1920 and 1936. It is a state which was given frontiers by Soviet power, and which became an offspring of that very super-structure that legitimated it.

What could be the legitimacy created by a super-state which has recently collapsed? It can be argued that the territorial legitimacy of the Kazakhs within the frame of what is called today Kazakhstan, can be historically proved with the help of various sources (local sources, oral epics, Oriental sources, Western travellers' sources, and so on). This documentation can point out the spread of the Kazakh ethnos as such; it was already on the territory between the Caspian Sea and the Balkash Lake at the end of the 15th century, long before the creation of the term Kazakhstan. The historical link between those Kazakhs of yesterday and today's Kazakhs, according to this territorial definition of Kazakh lands, is easy to prove.

Moreover, this historical link seems to have been reinforced thanks to the long-run involvement of the Russian state in Kazakh affairs. In other terms, Russian domination over Kazakh tribes, even if the tribes were split in three Hordes, seems to have helped them to crystallize their identity through a counter-legitimacy prism [i.e. the overwhelming weight of the Soviet Union helped bring the three tribes closer together in "opposition"] that is going to have a huge impact over the centuries, up to now. Kazakh lands were absorbed by the Russian empire in the course of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th century. Russia argues that some lands were only used temporarily by the Kazakh tribes as pasture, before Moscow encouraged the huge flow of Slav immigrants (1 million as of 1914). This confrontation between Russia and the Kazakhs has helped the latter define themselves in opposition as a specific identity on a specific territory, that is to say, non-Russian, non-Orthodox, non-sedentary people—i.e. Turkic, Muslim, nomad people.

Stalin's policy of territorial demarcation occurred from 1924 to 1936. Its consequence is an obvious legitimacy of the Kazakh state for the Kazakhs themselves; so far, 80% of the Kazakhs of the world live there; 95% of the Kazakhs of the former Soviet Union live there;

thousands of Kazakh families are coming back from abroad: in the last three years, one-hundred thousand. But, in a modern multi-cultural state at the end of the 20th century, the Soviet inheritance leads inevitably to inter-ethnic problems. The Soviet structure revealed a strong integration power.

As a non-ethnic union, the USSR lasted over seventy years. As the Soviet structure collapsed, the potential of various Yugoslav-type syndromes emerged. From the supra-national structure, we moved to a hyper national sub-structure, which is called today Kazakhstan. In other terms, the cost of the contradiction generated by the Soviet ideology, after it sublimated the imperial heritage, could be very high. The major problem that face Kazakhstan today (besides the tremendous economic crisis), is the setting of its relationship (I would say, normalization of its relationships) with Russians inside and outside the republic. This implies putting an end to the inferiority complex of the Kazakh people; to de-Russify their soul, their language; to help them to stop to define themselves only by the confrontation with Russia, with Russians, with the Russian language. In other terms, to be psychologically independent, without the persistent reference to Russia, despite the 3000-km frontier and the 6 million Russian citizens which live in the country.

The debate around the dual citizenship, and the language issue -Kazakh being the official state language- are clearly the consequences of the claim of historical legitimacy of the Russian population in this area. This is the reason why president Nazerbayev worked hard on the concept of "civil peace" to foster a new national consciousness for all the people living in the new state.

Some doubt that the Kazakh state can survive at all. It does not have real frontiers, and even if frontiers were in place, it would not be able to defend them. Moreover, it could not count on the loyalty of much of its own population. But Kazakhs are much more concerned about the porousness of the borders with China than they are about that of the borders with Russia. Kazakhs are much less concerned about a military threat from Russia than they are about political assimilation.

The first possible development, under these circumstances, is a transition from a nation-state, as it claims to be now, into a federation of two components, a Russian and a Kazakh component, so that the state would split into two pieces or into three pieces according to the ethnic aggregation that can be achieved. The Russian community in the north is likely to insist on secession from a state that is not giving it sufficient political representation, economic rights etc. A federal state is unlikely to work unless it is federated in a way which would give the Kazakhs some control of their own economy. Of course, the Russians are not particularly interested in promoting that at the moment. Nazerbayev realises that constructing a state that consists only of the Southern portion is not a viable economic option, and the Russians also understand that.

The second possibility is that of re-joining a tight form of federation with Russia. Of course, Russia has a very important interest in the future of Kazakhstan: strategic, ethnic, economic etc.. More on this will be said below, in the section on Russian-Kazakh relations.

The fragility of this state is thus obvious, but it may yet survive. The main force to this end could be provided by an evolution of current ethnic nationalism, which has already acquired some extreme forms on the parts of some Kazakhs—but also on the part of some Cossack, and sometimes extremist waves of Russian nationalism in some regions (like in the Urals where the majority is of Kazakh origins). The only way a break-up of Kazakhstan will be avoided is if this ethnic nationalism does not become the basis of the state. A new type of solidarity must be built on the basis of cultural pluralism, based mainly on two cultures, Russian and Kazakh (maybe adopting two official languages; it is an extremely sensitive issue for a territory where the great

majority of the people, about 80%, are Russians or Russian-speaking, and are not prepared to use Kazakh as their official language).

This is the third year of independence, and there is already a change in the approach of both Kazakhs and Russians. The first year was the year of euphoria, but after a while each side came to a more realistic approach. There is now a more realistic approach of the future relationship; this can be noticed in the negotiations between Nazerbayev and Eltsin, and also in all the negotiations at different levels on various issues. The idea that Kazakhstan cannot live without Russia is now widely accepted.

Relations with China deserve a special mention. There are problems for the border between Kazakhstan and China (that is about one thousand km). If a conflict should arise, it would not be solved, as with the borders with Russia, with a type of federation, but may lead to war. However, at the moment, China and Kazakhstan are cooperating quite well.

For example, the Uighurs in Kazakhstan are trying to get more autonomy (and perhaps some would even like independence), but China is cooperating with the Kazakhi government to discourage that. The Kazakhs will have major problems with the Uighurs. Some of Kazakhstan's Uighurs are looking for reunification with the Uighurs across the border, but the Uighurs across the border are not willing to support the Kazakhs. Therefore, there is a certain commune interest between Almaty and Beijing, and each is happy to cooperate to keep the Uighurs in their place. The Uighur's plight may somewhat resemble that of the Kurds. The Kazakhs have praised the Chinese contribution to regional stability.

It is true that there is a great Sinofobia in Kazakhstan, but that is mostly the legacy of the Soviet historiography; if you look to the past, you will see that there is nothing in the Kazakh-Chinese relationship to equal the brutality of the uprising of 1916, and the ferocity with which that was repressed by Russia. The Kazakhs have not forgotten the brutalities of the thirties, of the Collectivisation period. In the past they could not discuss these topics, which they are now discussing more and more... A new generation of historians will possibly take a more pro-Chinese line because they will be comparing the relationship with China and that with Russia, and they will find more evidence of physical brutality on the Russian side.

The pro-Chinese slant may be reinforced by a silent occupation of Chinese people is occurring in Kazakhi territories, immigrants who use Kazakhstan as a base to the West. In July 1993, police figures gave the official number of Chinese immigrants as 300 thousand in Kazakhstan, 70 thousand in Almaty. They penetrate legally (also through marriage), and are able to find flats, open up shops etc.

In some ways, this migration is puzzling: if you travel in the area you see a striking difference between Kazakhstan and Xingjang. In Xinjiang there is a booming economy. It is evidently a wealthy region, unlike Kazakhstan. Almaty is a stagnating town. The differences between the two regions are really striking. One would think that the migration flow would have gone exactly in the opposite direction, from Kazakhstan to Xinjiang. But the Chinese are more aggressive businessmen, they see opportunities in Kazakhstan, and they are moving in. The Kazakhs are still relatively passive. The Chinese are eager to take advantage of the new opportunities, the Kazakhs are not yet.

Moreover, the Kazakhs, at a governmental level, are beginning to look towards the economic policies of China, and are tremendously impressed by them. There might be fear of Chinese domination, but the policies in China are producing wealth, unlike those of Russia. The newly inaugurated railway linking China to Kazakhstan contributed to improve the relationship between the two countries. The volume of trade between the two countries is increasing at a

tremendous rate. There are also a road link and an air link. The economic prosperity of Xingjiang will favourably effect the area.

## **RUSSIAN-KAZAKH RELATIONS**

There are three main characteristics to the relationship between the Kazakhs and the Russians. The first is an alternating cycle of dependency and resentment. The dependency started in the 18th century, when the Kazakhs, under pressure from their neighbours to the east, not just the Chinese but other nomadic groups, turned to the Russians, that had already a powerful state, for support and protection. They soon discovered that Russian help was not based purely on altruism, but that there was a price to pay for it; the resentment set in. This cycle has continued: they need Russian help and protection from outside threats, but at the same time they resent the reality of Russian domination.

The second important characteristic is the fragmented nature of Kazakh society. In the past we had the main division of the three hordes, but now, in addition to that, there are cultural divisions between the russified Kazakhs of the cities, and the rural population that is, by a large, much less affected by Russian-Soviet culture; there are splits between the generations, there are different aspirations for the future... Society is divided, as it has traditionally looked for outside sponsors to further the aims of one particular group against the others. This is likely to be a major problem in the future, a major weakness in Kazakh society.

Thirdly, and this relates directly to the relationship with the Russian population, we have a clash of aspirations borne out of the perceptions of the needs of two very different lifestyles. The Slavs are a sedentary population, the Kazakhs are formerly nomadic populations. The difference here is one of territorial perception, perception of territorial needs. The former nomads lay claim to a very large area of some 2.7 million squared km. Their claim is based on a nomadic way of life, nomads need a lot of land. Their perception, therefore, is based on a past that no longer exists, but to which they are deeply bound by the most intimate bonds: their dead are buried there, there are epics record, there are oral traditions. In a very real sense, northern Kazakhstan is just as much their territory as is the south. But for the Russians, the sedentary population, their claim is based on the land they have worked, the land which they have made flourish—an argument, of course, which we have heard from many different people in many different parts of the world. The situation has been exacerbated by the Soviet legacy, with its cultivation of a sense of ethnocracy.

What are the implications of all this for the future? First of all, and this question has already been raised, everywhere in the world where two populations are more or less equally balanced, there have been problems: whether it is a country as large as Malaysia or as small as Fiji. It is extremely difficult to accommodate the aspirations of two peoples of very different cultures. In general, it is the indigenous population which has the advantage. Here, however, there is an additional factor, and that is that the Russian population, the in-comers, although slightly in the minority as compared to the Kazakhs, nevertheless are backed, just across the border, by a very large state of co-ethnics who are sympathetic to their claims, and will, in any crisis, inevitably, come to their protection.

So the Kazakhs are in fact in a very isolated position. They maybe slightly in the majority in their own republic, but they are extremely isolated. Nazerbayev is always thought to be an extremely wise and respected leader, but only by default, because there is no one else who could take his place. He is a short-term politician, moving from day to day. His horizons are bound at

the most at the end of this week, certainly not by next year. He is trying to accommodate different aspirations, to satisfy these different groups, making concessions here and there; resentments are growing.

## **ETHNIC TENSIONS IN KAZAKHSTAN**

The problem of ethnic tensions offers a double perspective, and also a double approach. One perspective is the tension between the Kazakh group, the ethnic group of the identity of the republic, and the other ethnic groups present in the country. The second is the tension within the Kazakh group, that is, between the three Hordes, over the distribution of land, over the distribution of posts among the three traditional Hordes, and also among themselves and the local leadership (even if not officially recognised, nevertheless they exist and they have a certain incidence in the balance of power inside Kazakhstan).

As for the two approaches, one could be to look at the ethnic tensions in Kazakhstan just through a demographic outlook or to look at it through an economic outlook.

About the ethnic question: if we compare the figures of 1989 (USSR figures) to those given in the middle of 1993 (CIS figures), we notice an increase in population which is largely due to migration waves into Kazakhstan from the neighbouring countries, mainly from China. Another group is that of the Germans. Today Germans are 650,000 about 5% of the population, mainly employed on agriculture. They seem to be willing to migrate; they come mainly from other regions of the former Soviet Union: they would like to go back to the Volga or to Odessa. Germany has already been trying to protect the minority with relief measures, mainly of an economic nature. In September 1993 a bilateral German-Kazakh declaration took place on the protection of minorities and ethnic groups; Germany provided financial and other aid.

In Kazakhstan, language limits the passive political rights of citizens. Perfect knowledge of the Kazakh language is now necessary in order to reach high political positions. This is a point not so much of political identity but of political power, because Kazakh is not a well known language even among the Kazakhs themselves. Here we must go back again to the different distinctions between the Kazakhs that are now urbanised and those still living in the countryside. They all speak Kazakh, but there are several different Kazakh dialects, with clear-cut distinctions. Not all of them are capable to understand each other. The urbanized Kazakhs speak Russian; it can happen, for example with official delegations, that Russian is used by the interpreter when two Kazakh cannot understand each other in their own language. This is a point of national identity and also of political discrimination, especially towards the Russians. It is also one of the reason why Russia is claiming dual citizenship, and why they say Russian should be recognised as an official language and not as a *lingua franca* (or maybe both as *lingua franca* and official language) inside Kazakhstan. In the parliamentary elections of March 1994, many Russians, as well as Kazakhs, have been excluded because of they did not speak Kazakh. The same issue is faced when we look at the high ranks and the different positions inside the government. This is a question of struggle for power and threatens to split the country.

The mutual difficulty for Kazakhs of different regions to understand each other will increase in the next two years. Right now, Kazakh is the official state language, but nobody yet has found examples of published text books. A couple of years ago people were saying that such books were going to be published. But, as such books require statements about history, mysteriously the paper has not been found, money, funds have not been found to pay the writers. However, to understand what it will probably happen we can refer by analogy to what happened

in Algeria. Arabic was made the official language rather early on after the independence from France (although senior Algerians still have difficulties in expressing themselves in Arabic). When Arabic began to be used at the lower levels of the schools, a phenomenon of mass education created a new vocabulary and a common use of Arabic which overcame dialectical differences, and in which new vehicles for ideas about religion and about ideas of nation came about. One could also look back at the establishment of a common language in France in the 19th century through mass schooling. This is going to happen very quickly, and when this happens a different perception of national identity will come about, not just from the people at the top, but at a very popular, basic level. This sort of thing will be very difficult to control, and must be observed very carefully in the next years, with the added element, unlike Algeria, that there is such a large non-Kazakh population that is going to feel increasingly excluded as this development comes to central stage, whereas it is now in the periphery. However, Algeria was part of a much larger Arabic world, and has been helped to teach the Arabic language by the fact that many teachers were coming from the Arabic world. Is there such a community for the Kazakhs? Where will they find cultural help? Secondly, in the modern world, language is created also by the media. Is there a common language in the media?

The Turks have understood at their own expenses how the idea of their own acceptability in the region because of a common language was wrong. The Turks set up an agency within their Foreign Ministry called TIKA, an international cultural agency established with the expressed purpose of investment in Central Asia. The largest investment the Turks made was on mass communications; they established a series of transmitters in the region. But half of them are useless because they are in regions where the people cannot understand the Turkic dialects and the Turk speech. The Turks have now essentially withdrawn from the region.

Another approach is to analyze the economic assets of Kazakhstan. Kazakhstan is one of the richest countries in terms of raw minerals and energy resources. Part of this potential has been discovered, but is not exploited on an industrial level. Among the main deposits we find oil, gas, gold, zinc, diamonds etc. Kazakhstan is both dependent on and complementary to Russia in terms of raw materials and energy resources. The two ethnic groups might clash on the basis of national identity, but as long as the economic and financial re-organization has not been completed, Russia and Kazakhstan cannot do without mutual support. These two states satisfy their respective requirements for raw and initially also processed materials thanks to reciprocal supplies established by bilateral agreements. Those agreements cannot be disattended if we want to speak of one Kazakhstan as it is, more or less, today. It is true that Nazerbayev is loosing control on the northern oblast of Kazakhstan, as the results of March 1994 elections showed, and one manifestation of this is the association created between the northern oblast of Kazakhstan and the southern oblast of Russia, which can be seen as a kind of flexible instrument to some kind of economic federation.

A related issue is how the three Hordes play within each other in terms of power-structure. In the past, Kazakhs have in turn looked both to China and to Russia for support. During the Soviet period, of the three Kazakhi hordes, it was the Great Horde that was in power. But sometimes members of the other hordes looked to Moscow for support against the Great Horde. In the future, rivalries between the hordes will become more pronounced, and some of them may well find that they can receive China's support (in which case, they would be perfectly happy to play China's game). Others would look for support from Russia, or Japan, or Korea... they will not the least be adverse to look for support. But outside help always comes with a price, and the difficult calculation is to see how far they can commit themselves.

The present leadership is using the rivalries among the Hordes to try to consolidate the state: for instance, they are speaking about Ablay Khan, the Khan that gave his loyalty to China, not to Russia as Abulkhayr Khan did... but there is only a certain fragmentation inside the Hordes, between different tribes, especially in the south. It is not quite correct to say that the Great Horde, which is mainly in the south, is more pro-Chinese than the northern Little Horde which is in the western part or the Middle Horde which is mainly in the eastern part. The fear of Chinese invasion is great in the south as well, because of the problems of Kazakhs inside the Xingjang region, because the Chinese are not giving them full rights for cultural autonomy.

## **THE POWER STRUCTURE IN KAZAKHSTAN**

The most critical component of the power structure in Kazakhstan is the presidency. While we use the word "presidency", many Kazakhs would say that he is a dictator, and also a look at the Constitution would show that he has dictatorial powers. This is not necessarily a bad thing, for he is not a cruel dictator, but nevertheless he is in supreme command. Nazerbaev has complete control of the Kazakh population because he appoints himself the governors in the region, and therefore they are loyal to him. He has his supporters in key positions at any level of society. It would be extremely difficult to dislodge him because it is not only one man, it is a pyramid. Nazerbaev is often called by the Kazakhs "the Khan", and he is the Khan, in fact. That is the system the Kazakhs are comfortable with; our concept of democracy is simply irrelevant here: if we want to work with the Kazakhs, we have to work with this structure.

Nazerbayev has been unchallenged for a long time, yet the present situation is characterised by various dilemmas facing the leadership. One of these is related to the post-Soviet nature of the state and the transitive and fluid character of statehood. Nazerbayev's government until Autumn 1993 supported the ethno-nationalistic vision of the future of Kazakhstan, and most Russian analysts accused him of speaking loudly about reunification with Russia while putting pressure on the Russian population. After autumn 1993 Nazerbayev began to talk domestically, openly and more exclusively, about the multi-national character of the state. But in the power structure of Kazakhstan this multi-national structure is not represented.

Kazakhs are occupying the most important posts. The last general elections ended with a victory of the Kazakhs; disappointment of the other ethnic groups led to some tensions between Almaty and Moscow. The Russian parliamentary observer (37% of the Russian population of Kazakhstan is about 50% of the electors, because they are on average older than the Kazakhs) that was sent to supervise Kazakhstan's elections made a very critical, negative report of the system of elections. As for the Parliament, among its 177 members, maybe one third represent a kind of mild opposition to Nazerbayev (some political parties of nationalistic origins which are demanding stronger priorities for the Kazakh population), and two thirds of the Parliament support Nazerbayev or neutral people who will support him if he is strong enough to control the power. Some Russians from the eastern Kazakhstan are represented in the Parliament (about four representatives from the Slavic movement); in eastern Kazakhstan they control local councils, yet almost all the executives ruling the regions are Kazakhs and mainly appointed by the president himself.

The other dilemma of Nazerbayev is whether to allow the Kazakhs to represent their local identities, or sub-identities. Nazerbayev is putting pressure on the non-Kazakh population in order to give to the Kazakhs more ground to consolidate and overcome subdivisions among them. Even the nuclear issue is used by him mainly for political purposes, to consolidate



Kazakhs, to make them more devoted to the idea of unity. Every ethnic group has a claim for a certain territory. The problem of relationships between different ethnic groups in power structure is related to this territorial issue.

One may envisage, for the future, some ways in which these problems will be solved. The first vision is the already mentioned notion of territorial state with cultural autonomy; this is the only way to preserve the unity of Kazakhstan. The second option is autonomy for the Russians; the growing movement in the Russian-populated areas demands political autonomy within the Kazakh state. This option is seen with reluctance by different Kazakhi forces. The third option is partition, already discussed; the option of a federation is not realistic. Another option is the status quo. The status quo can exist for a certain period of time but I think that of the first two options, maybe the option of autonomy (but not of partition) is the most feasible in the nearest future.

If the essential power structure is the presidency, others also play important roles. What is the role of the military, the security forces, or political parties? In the economic life, are there important managers, state enterprise directors of Soviet mold that still has a role to play?

There are groups of interest in Kazakhstan, but there is also fluidity in these groups. The directors of state-owned factories are still very influential. There is a certain shift in the ethnic composition of this category (Nazerbaev is trying to replace Russians with Kazakhs). In general, Kazakhs directors are more reluctant to reform than the Russians, especially when foreign investment is required. The Russians are in favour of a liberalization of the economy, also because without state control it would be easier for them to keep their positions. There are different group of interests, including the military (but this group is not that important in Kazakhstan, because it is also very fragmented). The nuclear lobby, mainly the industrial military enterprise, is very powerful in Kazakhstan. The military industrial complex related with Russia is willing to maintain a linkage with Russia, and indeed this is one of the most influential industrial groups in Kazakhstan.

The issue of the power centre in the military is a very dangerous one for Nazerbaev, as 98% of the officers are Russian. Part of the problem for the Kazakhs (but also of the Turkmens and Kirghizis) is to create an officer corps that reflects the indigenous desires of the population, as opposed to what the Russians would overlay. It is a particularly difficult issue for Nazerbaev, because he has to give to ethnic Kazakhs officers an opportunity for leadership, but not to the extent that would alienate him from the Russians.

There are Russians surrounding him for security purposes as part of an agreement he has with the Russians on this issue. It is also partly the fact that if there are Russians surrounding him, Moscow will likely know more about who is protecting him. There are some rivalries between some of the Kazakhs who are close to Nazerbaev, and he might be as concerned about them as he is about the Russians protecting him.

Another issue is whether or not the military will be transformed into a power centre. The Army at present is not a serious force, there is no national army as such, they are trying to build it up, but there will be problems (already emerging in the press) on the composition of the army: what to do with the Russian half of the army, where will their loyalty be. There are indications that there will be some discrimination, at that the official core will be chosen from the Kazakhs... But at the moment the army is not an important force. As for the security services, the successors to the KGB, they are important, and their loyalty is with Nazerbaev. It is not a presidential form of power, but a one-man system of power. Everything relates back to him, also at a business level.

The nuclear lobby is strong, and that is something which is not encouraged by the Russians. It is the kind of Kazakh nationalist approach of which the Russians are alarmed about. Anyway, they have some control, as the weapons are theirs, not of the Kazakhs. This leads to the security issues addressed in the next section.

## **KAZAKHSTAN'S NUCLEAR OUTLOOK**

Much has been said about ex-Soviet nuclear weapons left in Kazakhstan, but seminar participants were generally agreed that the problem has often been exaggerated. There is no evidence that there has been any smuggling of tactical nuclear weapons from Kazakhstan. The bulk of tactical nuclear weapons were never deployed in Kazakhstan anyway.

The Kazakhs could ultimately decide that they do not like the conditions the Russians set for dismantlement of SS-18 ICBMs, but that is unlikely. They have no control of nuclear facilities. There should be no misunderstanding. They have no knowledge about how to make either the non nuclear components of a nuclear weapon or how to reprocess spent fuel, and certainly not about to enrich uranium. None of that was ever done in Kazakhstan before. Few Kazakhs worked in nuclear facilities outside Kazakhstan (in the former Soviet Union).

The strategic weapons are under the strict possession of the Russians; to assume that the Kazakhs could do anything with them, you have to assume that first they would have to overrun the Russians, which is highly unlikely to happen—one participant heard from Kazakhi officials about contingency plans to drop paratroopers on Russian silos to seize the weapons! But even assuming that the Kazakhs could come in possession of a strategic weapon, they would not be able to do anything with it; this for a number of reasons: lack of maintenance, of which the weapons are already suffering, and because they do not know what to do with them. They do not have the codes, it would not take a short time to bypass them.

What they do have is the ability to surround the Russians if they do not like the conditions under which the Russians have set the dismantlement. If there is a showdown, it would be over the disposal of some of these weapons. Some are enormously destructive weapons, next to the SS-9 are the largest weapons the Soviets ever built.

However, Kazakhs are going to be involved in a process of dismantlement of some these weapons. This is part of the agreement with Russia and the US. They will have a role, and they might learn. They do not have any enrichment or reprocessing ability now, but they can train scientists over a ten year period, for instance. Perhaps they will not do it, but to suggest that they do not have the capability misstates the value that the Kazakhs put on these weapons. They are not a nuclear power, and they do not have an incentive in becoming one, but to portray them as incompetent on this technology is wrong. They have many highly professional scientists, including nuclear physicists. True, they do not have experience in this field. But they certainly have the basic preparation, and they could be trained, but the question is who will train them, and how long would it take do that. The potential exist, but it is not a force that they command.

## **THE ISLAMIC FACTOR IN KAZAKHSTAN**

Last year, during a visit to Cairo, the president displayed his disapproval for islamic extremism. He did the same during his trip to China. But in Teheran, and when he received Rafsanjani in Almaty, he supported the integralism. Is Nazerbayev a religious man? Nazerbayev is a very secular man, and is opposed to any kind of Islamic activism. His comments on the situation in

Tadjikistan were very aggressive against Islamic fundamentalism.

Central Asia indicated the way we must continue to think Islam as a religion, and of looking for signs of internal debate among Muslims. Even where we have an Islamic factor in politics, we have many Muslim voices (also within Iran). In Central Asia, with the partial example of Uzbekistan, we do not have people active politically identifying themselves as Muslims, and acting politically as Muslims. The US information service regularly takes polls, but we know very little in terms of religiosity. One might look at mosques building as an indicator of the impact of religion: there is a mosque in Almaty, supported by external funding (mainly Saudi), but this is not a very interesting factor in itself. It is more interesting to look at the reports (even if fragmented) on the mosques built in the rural areas, quite often with very small public resources.

Why are people constructing these mosques? It is not a sinister political way to look at it, but a way of indicating that these are things more significant to understand what is going on. Why are mosques even being constructed in the northern areas of Slavic majority, or in the oil field areas where the Muslim population (or, the Kazakh population) is perhaps as low as 20%. This is something that one wants to watch for the near future. There is an official religious establishment which looks very much like a child who has been abused. This sort of leadership is discredited in the general population. It would be very unlikely to see any of them to play any particular role.

However, what one does find is the already mentioned informal help from Turks, not officially from Turkey, but from various private foundations in Turkey and even more in Germany, who are very interested in seeing that the "right sort" of ideas about Islam are spread regularly. It is interesting to note that it is Germany (on the initiative of the Turks in Germany) that contributes to this sort of spread of religion. There is no Muslim trans-national network at work here, but what there is (as it was seen in North Africa) is that when you have these networks of teaching, these networks of learning about religions, even though they have nothing to do with politics now, they are creating a network of communication which is unofficial, and which can be used for whatever purposes may come in some later times.

This is the sort of things for long-distance thinking about transformations in the area which merits some concern. Among these young, there is a clear recognition of how difficult it is for people locally to understand their Turkish, so they learn how to speak the local languages instead. There is this willingness to do so which is not seen in Turkish business school professors who fly out for a few days to give a talk on how to conduct business and then fly back. The audience either learns Turkish or learns nothing.

The second thing to watch for the future is something that links the notion of Islam with what we have said about languages. As one gets a *lingua franca* in Kazakh, where Kazakh begins to be used for educated purposes more than it has been up to now (which is something that has hardly started), along with that is going to go a greater sense of religious recognition. This happened in the Arab world. Even if one speaks of the Arabian peninsula, one finds that the new Muslim intellectuals, those who are most concerned about their Muslim identity, are not the people of an older generation, they are the young educated people who get most interested in religious matters, and in fact people who have a technical background rather than a background in the humanities: engineering, medicines (and medicines are much likely to be where your new Muslim intellectuals come from rather than law, or the humanities or the social sciences in any way).

But as language shifts, there is going to be a wider audience for people in order to speak

in Kazakh or in their own language. It is important not to exaggerate what outsiders can do in these ways. As one gets a mass education in Kazakh, we are going to see a lot of things change, and not only in education but also in communication, as mass media are going to spread more. First is going to be a changed sense of authority. You are not going to look for your mullah, rather, as it happened in Uzbekistan, you are going to look for the leader who used to be a garage mechanic, who was highly educated.

Outside powers also play a role in relation to the Islamic factor. Iran is officially very restrained in the area. In addition, they lack the resources to give anything else terribly interesting one way or another. There is not much happening (or at least there is no sign of it) either in Central Asia or Azerbaijan. Turkey is more interesting, not so much official Turkey, but rather the unofficial part of people sharing partially a certain closeness in terms of language. In general, it can be argued that Turkey offers two sorts of models: one is the official model, but there is the other side of Turkey, the side that we have seen recently when the fundamentalists won, in a significant way, municipal elections. There is this element, plus the Turks getting very suspicious about Uzbeks... one sees the potential for more interesting things going on there, in which one might see more.

In sum, one would not think of a connection between methodism in Wales and politics, but because the structure of methodist churches in Wales in the 19th century was the one form of network of communication, one found that the network of churches formed a framework by which Welsh nationalism was able to be built. It is just a comparison, but in the Central Asian case one should look at local factors and not trans-national factors, and look for a growth in mosques and religion to find one way in which one may have regional and national understandings of politics come to the fore in the future.

Kazakhstan is regarded as the most secular republic in Central Asia, mainly because of its mixed ethnic character and the nomadic population. But at the same time we see that in societies where the differences of "civilisation" are significant, and where the nomadic character of part of the population is exacerbating some "civilisational" conflicts, the unexpected rise of Islamic feelings is very natural. We saw that in various cases in the Middle East. At some time an unexpected wave of Islamic integralism might emerge in Kazakhstan. In general, even if there is not an Islamic boom, one cannot exclude that a constant rise of Islamic feelings exist.

## CONCLUSIONS

Central Asia is in a period of transition. But it is not only Central Asia that is in this process of change, it is the all world. We are shifting our view of world politics from a bipolar to a multipolar vision. We are not sure where the ultimate centre of the world will be, the Far East, the Middle East, or still the West... it is an uncertain period. All the conclusions we come to are bound to be interim conclusions. We can make analogies, and analogies are useful, but still, there is nothing like the Soviet experience. When we talk about Algeria, or Pakistan and India... we are giving very vague comparisons, there is nothing that really closely resembles the experience of the former Soviet Central Asian republics. We know very little, and a great deal of humility is required from us. This seminar has highlighted two tasks: on the one hand we must stand back and try to be objective; on the other hand, the second task is to give advice to people who wish to work in that area. It is a different mission, and we have to remember that these are two completely different tasks, and should not be confused. In other words, it maybe in the interest of the West or of any given company to provide training. How this is going to effect the region is a

separate question. We should not think that by doing something in our interest we are also going to produce a major change. We are outsiders, and basically we are observers.

In Kazakhstan we have the most contradictory and complicated case in the all post-Soviet world. A country that has a lot of resources, but where the crisis is deeper than in some other republics. We have a people who suffered a lot during the Soviet period, maybe more than in the other Central Asian states, but who is more russified and maybe more devoted to some kind of union with Russia, and in general more tolerant toward Russia. It is a mostly secular state with some signs of hidden strife for a new identity, and maybe the muslim alternative will become more important in the next few years. So, it is a country that can live happily with its oil and gas resources, but at the same time is suffering for many different conflicts. The unpredictability of future developments in Kazakhstan need a constant monitoring and deep analysis of new tendencies in the country.

The West should keep opened its intellectual (and commercial) imagination so that we can find a way to be less surprised in the future about developments connected with religious issues. This also means that we should avoid to see religious threats where they do not exist. We need a new way to think about politics. We should not listen to the leadership of the Central Asian countries when they assure us that religion is not a political issue. It may not be at present time, but we should keep our attention alive, so that we can listen to new voices which may be very important in regional and local politics. Another issue would be to suggest to those people who are concerned with policy and commercial decisions, that there is a lot to be done even for narrow commercial interests in terms of thinking of how to make transitions in terms of patrons of employment, in terms of education, in terms of bringing people to US colleges or NATO war colleges. This might be regarded as political interference, but it is the right kind of intervention.