



Kazakhstan's Echo

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Tokaev: Shared Values Bring Kazakhstan and U.S. Closer

Kassymzhomart Tokaev, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan, will visit Washington next week.

On the eve of his visit, we offer our readers excerpts from Minister Tokaev's recent statements on issues such as:

- relations with the United States,
- the situation in Iraq and the fight against terrorism,
- the future of democracy in Kazakhstan,
- regional cooperation in Central Asia,
- nonproliferation of weapons of mass destruction and disarmament, and
- greater interaction with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

These excerpts are from a speech at the *Asia Society's* conference in Almaty on June 15 and an interview on *The Line of Power*, a program of the Kazakhstan national TV channel, aired August 10, 2005.



Kassymzhomart Tokaev

Relations with the U.S., Situation in Iraq and the Fight against Terrorism

“From the very beginning of our independence we have been relying upon the support of the United States of America. We shall always keep in our historic memory the undeniable fact that it was the U.S. Government which in fact underwrote, politically and legally, Kazakhstan's sovereignty.

Therefore, despite the fact that we had some reservations regarding the production of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, we nevertheless made a difficult decision to send our military contingent to Iraq to express our solidarity and support of the U.S. struggle to build democracy and civil society there.

We also believe that the time has come to put aside the international debate on the legitimacy of the military operation in Iraq and to join our efforts to make that country a success story in creating democracy in this region.

We greatly appreciate the fact that it is the United States which made fifty percent of all our foreign investments. On our side, we stand ready to legally and politically protect financial and economic interests of the United States in Kazakhstan. We strongly believe in sanctity of the contracts with major American companies and will not change this position under any circumstances.

However, our commitment to cooperation with the United States is not driven by dollars alone; we view our ties with the United States in a much broader context. For that reason we joined the antiterrorist coalition without any preconditions and opened our airspace to the U.S. military aircraft involved in the operations in Afghanistan. Kazakhstan became the only country from Central Asia and one of the very few Muslim majority nations to send its military to Iraq, and today our soldiers continue to carry out their mission. We have close contacts with the relevant U.S. agencies dealing with security and other sensitive issues.

We appreciate the consistent dialog with the United States Government and civil institutions on the issues of democracy building in our country. We need good advice and guidance, we need support and understanding.

Evolution, Not Revolution

Despite the fact that Kazakhstan has never had traditions of Western style democracy, building civil society in our country is now an irreversible process. The main accomplishment is that democracy has already taken root in Kazakhstan and cannot be stopped by anyone. Although there are certain reservations and concerns in the West about democracy in our country, Kazakhstan is still making progress in this area, surpassing all the neighboring countries.

Kazakhstan must develop along the path of evolution, not revolution, and this is my deep belief. It was no coincidence experts at Harvard University called Kazakhstan's way of development an 'evolutionary' and special one. We simply cannot afford to have coups, upheavals and cataclysms.

I don't subscribe to the theory of export of revolution. For a revolution to take place, be it a 'colored' one or another type, necessary social, economic and political conditions are needed. One must admit former authorities in Georgia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan 'tried' hard to make way for these revolutions. I don't think people should talk about intrigues by some secret services or nongovernmental organizations, although they did demonstrate an interest. This interest was in directing or trying to direct the situation and events into a desired channel. But it was clumsy actions by the authorities which played the decisive role.

Looking at events in these countries, one can draw some lessons: First, there should be effective economic reforms of the type aimed at satisfying the pressing needs of the people. We are doing this in Kazakhstan, but we see that so far social and economic problems are not being solved following the changes of power [in other countries]. People's expectations are hanging in the air.

Second, political reforms should receive due attention which we do in Kazakhstan. There is a universal opinion of foreign experts that Kazakhstan is the most advanced country in terms of democratic reforms not just in our region, but in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).

Furthermore, we need to pay special attention to election techniques. The so called administrative resources and 'dirty' technologies are becoming a thing of the past. People need to learn to work cleanly, to not allow violations to happen either during the presidential or the parliamentary elections. People should not be given reason to doubt the results of elections.

I believe we can solve the issues in our country without outside interference, through exchange of opinions, through dialog, and through so called national efforts. We know our difficulties and problems, and we need to resolve them inside our country on our own.

Greater Regional Cooperation Needed in Central Asia

Kazakhstan wants regional cooperation to be developed and strengthened. It is a difficult process bearing in mind existing discrepancies in Central Asia. We clearly understand that Kazakhstan cannot be a prosperous country while having poor and unstable neighbors in the region. We urge all

our Central Asian partners to make joint efforts to combat religious extremism, illicit drug trafficking and arms flow, illegal migration and human trafficking. We also urge our Central Asian partners to be seriously involved in economic reforms, in creating jobs and improving the living standards in their countries. That would greatly contribute to addressing the problems of terrorism and extremism.

We are very hopeful that trade and economic cooperation in Central Asia will become a serious basis for regional stability and security. Kazakhstan is actively involved in promoting close cooperation and bridging the differences between the states of the region. Central Asia itself is a big market. Once consolidated, it could create good opportunities for attracting huge investments. Central Asia has every reason to become a vibrant society, and an active player in international trade. In this respect, we believe that regional groupings such as the Organization of Central Asian Cooperation and Shanghai Cooperation Organization may give a strong impetus to regional cooperation. We support the dialogue between Central Asia and Japan and wish to be actively involved in that process. We also value the framework agreement signed between the USA and Central Asian governments on regional cooperation [TIFA, Trade and Investment Framework Agreement].

WMD Nonproliferation and Disarmament

We are firmly committed to a more secure world. Kazakhstan made a crucial decision to renounce its nuclear arsenal and to join two major treaties, the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty and the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty.

Unfortunately, until now the international community has not developed unified and fair approaches to the most pressing issues of nuclear nonproliferation. Nuclear weapons have allegedly found their way into the hands of non-state actors and terrorists. We in Kazakhstan strongly believe there must be no bargaining on issues of nuclear nonproliferation. There must be no excuse for nuclear weapons trade. There must be no mercy for the countries engaged in the production or sales of nuclear weapons. There must be no differentiation for the so called 'good' and 'bad' countries as far as nuclear proliferation is concerned.

OSCE Must Deal with Three Tasks Simultaneously

The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) should strike a balance between the three tasks as provided for in its mandate. Europe has clearly delineated its organizational priorities: the European Union deals with the economy, NATO deals with military aspects, and the OSCE deals with the so called humanitarian dimension. Yet, the OSCE mandate has three 'baskets' including social and economic ties, security, and the humanitarian dimension. We support filling all three 'baskets' equally.

People should not overload one basket while leaving two others half empty. People should not just deal with humanitarian dimension or election monitoring in post-Soviet states, including Kazakhstan.

Opponents of this view tell us the more democracy, the greater the attention to the humanitarian dimension, the more cooperation, the more security. In principle, one can agree with this. But, recent events in London have shown that security is an important dimension in itself which should receive absolutely full attention.

As an OSCE member, Kazakhstan is ready to contribute to the development of that organization. First, we offer our territory, not in a physical sense, but in terms of the development of dialog over such an important area as cooperation in Central Asia. Nothing like this existed in the OSCE before. Second, we all say the agenda should include such important issues as terrorism, drug trafficking, illegal migration, trafficking in persons, small arms trade, and the threat of terrorists getting

their hands on nuclear materials. Will anybody deal with these issues in Central Asia, or are we going to just observe the elections? That is important, I agree, but let us deal with all the issues as a package. I don't think we meet resistance or disagreement, and we have a normal dialog with the OSCE on these issues.

Kazakhstan Has Right to Chair OSCE

Kazakhstan has achieved recognized successes both in its economic development, and in the development of democracy. Those are irrefutable facts. As the largest and the most advanced country in Central Asia, Kazakhstan has a right to take on the chairmanship of this respected organization [in 2009]. For Kazakhstan, invited to join the OSCE in 1992, this organization has been and will continue to be a priority because European values play a leading role in today's world. Yes, we are a Eurasian country. In terms of economy we have borrowed a lot of experience from both the West and, more recently, the East. But fundamental human values are mostly based in Europe.

What is a chairmanship? First of all, it has to do with prestige, and there's no other way of saying it. On the other hand, it is a great stimulus for continuing reforms in our country. So the process is a two way street. This is what we are telling our partners. Dialog and exchange of opinions continue. Sometimes, we find it difficult to find understanding, but then this is what the diplomatic service is all about."

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Kassymzhomart Tokaev, a career diplomat, has been Minister of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan since January 2002. He occupied the same post from 1994 to 1999, and is the "Dean" of foreign ministers of the Commonwealth of Independent States. He served as the country's Prime Minister in 1999-2002, the years when robust economic growth began. Minister Tokaev has a Ph.D. in political science and is the author of several books on international affairs and foreign policy, most recently, "Meeting the Challenge" (2004), a lively documented account of the establishment and development of an independent Kazakhstan.

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