

## SOME PROBLEMS OF KAZAKHSTAN'S CURRENT FOREIGN POLICY

Murat LAUMULIN

*D.Sc. (Political Science),  
Chief Researcher  
at the Kazakhstan Institute for Strategic Studies  
(Almaty, Kazakhstan)*

### *Introduction*

At the beginning of 2011, Kazakhstan's foreign policy entered a new stage. The country passed a serious political test—chairing the OSCE and hosting the Organization's summit meeting in Astana. This year, it faces two new tests: chairing the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and hosting the Council of Foreign Ministers of the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the SCO summit.

The OSCE summit in December 2010 amply showed that such events are far from formalities requiring no more than paying official tribute to political obligations, this time Astana's. Such functions are often closely related to a spe-

cific problem in international relations. In this context, the present turning point in Kazakhstan's foreign policy is a clear sign of the demands of the times.

Recent experience is good way to gage the transformation in Kazakhstan's foreign policy and its international status. The year 2010 will be remembered in the history of Kazakhstan and its foreign policy for its many important events. The most vibrant of them was without a doubt the OSCE summit in Astana. However, in terms of strategic consequences, establishment of the Customs Union among Kazakhstan, Russia, and Belarus should be considered the most important.

## The Heritage of 2010

It was Kazakhstan's chairmanship in the OSCE, however, that set the pace for the country's foreign policy as a whole in 2010. As one Kazakhstan observer noted, Kazakhstan's task was not to meet the OSCE standards, but to create new standards corresponding both to present reality and to the interests of the Organization's participating states, whereby with the help of those countries that view the OSCE as an effective mechanism for maintaining stability and ensuring security.

The Kazakhstan president's participation in the anti-nuclear summit in Washington in April can be singled out as one of the head of state's noteworthy foreign visits. This historical meeting of three presidents—America's Barack Obama, Russia's Dmitry Medvedev, and Kazakhstan's Nursultan Nazarbaev—in Washington in April 2010 at the anti-nuclear summit brought attention once again to Kazakhstan's enormous contribution to nuclear non-proliferation. This was largely promoted by the initiatives the Kazakhstan president laid on the table before the leaders of the leading, primarily nuclear, nations and the world community as a whole. Nuclear security and non-proliferation is an area in which Kazakhstan recognizes its moral superiority. It is also the source and essence of Kazakhstan's foreign policy conception.

Kazakhstan essentially asked the old members of the nuclear club to forego their nuclear sovereignty (which they promised to do during the drawing up of the NPT at the end of the 1960s). The Kazakhstan president also proposed revising international law regarding nuclear non-proliferation. He suggested conducting an expert analysis of all the existing international acts on non-proliferation and the fight against nuclear terrorism and combine them into a single strategic policy document—a new universal agreement on comprehensive horizontal and vertical non-proliferation and destruction of nuclear weapons. This kind of document is called upon to guarantee that double standards are not used and envisages specific sanctions against its violators. This proposal was also revolutionary in nature.

The well-known events in Kyrgyzstan in April and June of 2010 were a serious test for Kazakhstan's foreign policy. In fact they were a test of Kazakhstan's strength not only as OSCE chairman, but also as a responsible regional leader. The political situation that developed as a result of the events in Kyrgyzstan was fraught with many ambiguous consequences for Kazakhstan's foreign policy, economy, and national security. Kyrgyzstan is Kazakhstan's closest neighbor and the closest country to it culturally, historically, and mentally. This factor, as well as Kyrgyzstan's direct geographic proximity, its specific international status, Kazakhstan's national security interests, and the close social and economic ties between the two republics make Kazakhstan far from indifferent to the further development of events in this country.

Kazakhstan's policy toward Kyrgyzstan was built on certain fundamental criteria. Astana's actions were closely coordinated with Russia's, which was also extremely interested in rapid stabilization of the situation in Kyrgyzstan. Astana notified all the participants in the political struggle in Kyrgyzstan through diplomatic and political channels (primarily via the OSCE) that it would not tolerate the use of armed forces or repetition of the bloodshed in the republic. Astana also supported all the progressive and moderate forces in the republic in order to bring about rapid stabilization and normalization of the situation. Regular consultations were held with the republic's temporary leadership on current and mid-term issues regarding further development, keeping in mind such objectives as holding full-fledged and legitimate parliamentary and presidential elections within time-limits conducive to retaining stability. The Kazakh and international law enforcement structures also coordinated their efforts to neutralize the Kyrgyz criminal environment and its influence on the republic's political life.

Nursultan Nazarbaev's visit to South Korea can be singled out as a key event in the Asian vector, which brought both countries to a qualitatively new level of cooperation. The sides agreed to declare 2010 the Year of Kazakhstan in South Korea and 2011 the Year of South Korea in Kazakhstan.

The third CICMA (the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia) summit should be named as one of the significant events in security. Kazakhstan passed on the CICMA chair to Turkey, but retained control over the Conference through the system of partner organizations. Kazakhstan attended the third CICMA summit held on 8 June, 2010 in Istanbul as the current chairman of two large regional structures on the continent—CICMA and the OSCE. The mandate for chairmanship in the Conference was passed from Kazakhstan to Turkey. This demonstrated that CICMA is not a purely Kazakh project. Consensus blocking was applied at the Istanbul summit (the Conference members condemned Israel's actions regarding a caravan of ships taking humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip, but Israel refused to support the inclusion of any provisions condemning its actions in the text of the final resolution).

The final document adopted in Istanbul was a corrected and updated version of the declaration of the second CICMA summit adopted on 17 June, 2006 in Almaty. The corrections were stylistic in nature, while the updates reflected the changed situation with its regional risks and threats. For example, an entire section in the Istanbul declaration is devoted to Afghanistan. In his message to the forum participants, Nursultan Nazarbaev noted that CICMA is adapting quickly to the changing world and consistently increasing its cooperation with the OSCE, so Kazakhstan does not exclude the possibility of creating "some joint platform regarding security and trust throughout the Eurasian expanse" in the future.

German Federal Chancellor Angela Merkel's visit to Astana in July 2010 was an important event in the European vector. Kazakhstan made it understood that it is ready to deliver its gas to Germany via the Nabucco pipeline. It stands to reason that Germany is interested in this project coming to fruition. But its resource base has not been ultimately determined. The improved project presumes transporting natural gas from the Caspian region to the European countries without passing through Russia—from Turkmenistan through Azerbaijan, Georgia, Turkey, Bulgaria, Hungary, Rumania, and Austria—whereby it will supplement the Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum gas pipeline, which is already in operation. President Nursultan Nazarbaev claims that it is the European Union's sluggishness that is causing Astana's hesitancy. The Kazakhstan leader named two conditions necessary for his country's participation in this project: the gas pipeline must be laid along the bottom of the Caspian Sea through the Caucasus to the Black Sea and further or LNG plants must be built on the Kazakhstan coast of the Caspian. This is Kazakhstan's way of testing the waters and seeing how the West and Moscow will react. Astana has changed its tactics and is taking Baku's cue by looking at several projects at once and choosing the most advantageous.

At the beginning of 2010, Uzbekistan and the U.S. expressed serious objections to holding the summit in Astana. The disagreement with Tashkent was settled in March during Nursultan Nazarbaev's meeting with Islam Karimov. And, later, Astana also managed to secure Washington's support.

In August 2010, Japanese Minister of Foreign Affairs Katsuya Okada visited the republic. Tokyo was intent on stepping up the activity of Japanese companies in developing energy resource fields in Kazakhstan and other republics of the region. Cooperation in the nuclear sphere was also a fundamental topic of discussion during Katsuya Okada's visit to Astana. President Nursultan Nazarbaev formulated a cooperation plan while he was in Tokyo in the summer of 2008: "We have the uranium and you have the high technology." This plan is still being implemented today. The problem is delivering Kazakhstan uranium to Japan. Almost all of the uranium intended for Japan is sent through St. Petersburg to the U.S., Canada, and France for enrichment, and only then reaches

the Land of the Rising Sun. Moreover, only a small part of nuclear fuel is enriched in Russia. The project of an eastern route for delivering Kazakhstan uranium to Japan is currently being drawn up. There are plans for it to pass through the Far East. In exchange, Japan wants to suggest that all the uranium imported from Kazakhstan be enriched in Russia.

Japan is also interested in the region's oil and gas industry. An example of this kind of cooperation in Kazakhstan is the activity of Japan's JOGMEC Corporation in the Caspian Sea, which is actively cooperating with KazMunaiGaz, Kazakhstan's national company.

An important event in the Russian vector was the meeting between the presidents of the two countries in Ust-Kamenogorsk in September 2010 where they signed 27 agreements that touched on almost every sphere of Kazakhstan's and Russia's economies.

And finally, the Astana summit was an impressive finale not only to last year, but also to an entire era in the history of Kazakhstan's foreign policy, and proved that the republic is a responsible member of the international community and capable of hosting such high-level meetings.

On the whole, 2010 was a time of renewal for Kazakhstan's foreign policy and its main vectors, goals, and objectives, which shows that Kazakhstan is transforming from a regional country into one of the main international players, that is, moving up to a higher and more important rung on the world's ranking ladder. Kazakhstan is essentially already leaving the boundaries of Central Asia. The world community regards it as a responsible Eurasian state with its own interests and healthy ambitions.

All the same, despite the successes and achievements of the past year, the problems relating to Central Asian security and Kazakhstan's international status, along with the constant geopolitical pressure it feels from different sides, are still very evident and have shifted to a new level.

## Traditional Policy

The Russian vector is still vitally important in Kazakhstan's foreign policy and is comprised of an extremely extensive agenda, ranging from security and the economy to social and humanitarian cooperation. There can be no doubt that 2010 was an outstanding year from the viewpoint of cooperation between Kazakhstan and Russia in all areas. The creation of the Customs Union, Kazakhstan's chairmanship in the OSCE, and the political interaction between Astana and Moscow, particularly at the presidential level, were determining factors in bilateral cooperation last year. Russia rendered Kazakhstan unconditional political support during its chairmanship in the OSCE.

Kazakhstan and Russia are strategic partners and close allies in the post-Soviet expanse. The cooperation between the two states encompasses almost every sphere of possible interaction: from the economy to cultural and humanitarian relations. At present, cooperation is actively developing in the political, military-technical, economic, and humanitarian spheres, which is of particular significance for the internal development of the two states and their interaction on the international arena.

During 2010, Kazakh-Russian relations developed both at the bilateral level and within the framework of multilateral cooperation institutions, such as the CIS, EurAsEC, Customs Union, CSTO, SCO, and OSCE. The joint action plan for Kazakhstan and Russia in 2009-2010 played an important role in the development of bilateral relations, formed the backbone of the agreements reached between the two countries, and included 40 specific undertakings. They cover the entire range of Kazakh-Russian cooperation in the political, economic, scientific, and humanitarian spheres, whereby the scope of these undertakings is enormous. For example, a joint oil balance and oil transportation plan is being developed in the fuel and energy complex, and a comprehensive cooperation program with respect to peaceful use of the atom is being implemented.

Kazakhstan's share in bilateral trade turnover amounts to more than 18 percent of the total volume of the country's foreign trade. Industrial cooperation covers such spheres as energy, space exploration, and innovative technology. After the Customs Union was established, Kazakhstan became the closest country to Russia in the post-Soviet expanse. And after the Common Economic Space (CES) is launched in 2012, both countries, along with Belarus, might be quite capable of forming a structure similar to the EU.

The chronology of 2010 is a graphic illustration of the progress accomplished in Kazakh-Russian relations. The Customs Union of three states—Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Russia—has been functioning officially since 1 January and in practical terms since 1 July. This has become the main and determining factor in the relations among the three countries actively discussed in Kazakhstan throughout the year. Many have been noting the fact that the republic is supposedly losing large amounts of money (a figure of 75 billion tenge—\$500 million—was mentioned) due to the reduction in customs revenue into the budget. This gives reason to conclude that joining the Customs Union was a political rather than economic move. But it should be noted that similar viewpoints have been expressed at the level of public opinion in both Russia and Belarus. Many people in these countries also believe that significant losses have been incurred from creating the Customs Union. So who benefited from it?

In reality, creation of the Customs Union will attract investments in the non-raw-material sector of Kazakhstan's economy. Kazakhstan manufacturers can expand their opportunities in the pharmaceutical industry. Mutual recognition of all permits will make it possible for medication to circulate freely in the Customs Union. The barriers in Russia are too high at present for foreign manufacturers to gain access, however these restrictions no longer apply to Kazakhstan. On the whole, in the long term, the union should have a positive effect on Kazakhstan's economy. In particular, an increase in the competitiveness of Kazakhstan manufacturers and a decrease in smuggling can be expected.

In grain production, Kazakhstan and Russia provide up to 17 percent of the world's wheat export. There are currently around 3,000 companies with Russian investments operating in Kazakhstan, and most of them are involved in border cooperation. The problem today is Kazakhstan's southern border, which is now the border of the Customs Union. Transfer of customs control to the external borders of the countries has only been partially accomplished: the Russian-Belarusian customs border has disappeared, while the Russian-Kazakh border will continue to exist until July 2011, by which time Kazakhstan must put a stop to smuggling and the re-export of Chinese goods by Kyrgyzstan.

At the beginning of December, the countries of the Customs Union agreed to introduce unified regulations and standards for oil and petroleum products within the framework of the Common Economic Space. Kazakhstan wants to increase the throughput of the pipeline to 67 million tons of oil a year. But this will require building new pumping stations and oil reservoirs at the terminal near Novorossiysk and installing another single mooring point. The hopes rest on Russia, which agreed to almost double Kazakhstan's quota in the CPC from 27.5 million to 52.5 million tons, thus saving the republic from having to look for other alternatives for delivering crude oil to Europe. As of today, Kazakhstan is pretty much satisfied with the pumping capacities through Russia.

Close cooperation between the two states has made it possible in recent years to soften the blows of the world financial and economic crisis. There has been a drop in demand for bank loans in both Kazakhstan and Russia. In the uranium industry, the national nuclear companies of both countries are acting as a united front in relations with foreign partners. In so doing, the Russian nuclear industry is still Kazakhstan's main partner, ensuring the complete processing and enrichment cycle of Kazakh uranium.

Russia and Kazakhstan are also closely cooperating in the space industry. Both states are about to launch a large-scale international program. Of particular significance is the fact that the launching pads at Baikonur are designed for Russian- and Ukrainian-made missile carriers.

In 2010, cooperation between Russia and Kazakhstan actively continued in the transportation sphere. As early as 2008, a memorandum was signed between the transport ministries of Kazakhstan and Russia on cooperation and the development of roads linking Western Europe and Western China.

Kazakhstan has begun building the Western Europe-Western China highway and has already begun rebuilding the roads in certain sections of this major artery. Russia, in turn, is carrying out feasibility studies of this project. By 2013, it will be possible to put part of the highway, the Kazakh and Chinese sections, into operation. By this time, Russia is expected to have begun building its section of the highway.

But there are still unresolved problems in bilateral relations: one of them is related to increasing the amount of time the citizens of one country can stay in the other country without registration (for example, Ukrainian citizens can stay in Russia without registration for 90 days, while Kazakhstan citizens can stay for only three days).

There is a shortage of drinking water in Central Asia. So at a meeting in Ust-Kamenogorsk, President Nursultan Nazarbaev suggested returning to the idea of reversing the flow of Siberia's rivers.

The participation of Kazbrig in the peacekeeping operation in Afghanistan is still a bone of contention in the military-strategic sphere, which Moscow is against. Astana, in turn, does not want Moscow to squeeze Georgia out of the Commonwealth's orbit regardless of the fact that Georgia has already officially withdrawn from the CIS.

Work has begun on the joint action plan for 2011-2012, which is conducive to Kazakh-Russian relations, and a program that will extend to 2020 is being drafted. In the next ten years, Russia will evidently play an even greater role as Kazakhstan's main political and economic trade partner.

## Security Problems and the European Vector

Kazakhstan's main objective is to strengthen the collective security system in Central Eurasia; that is, settle the Afghan problem and eliminate the threat posed by radical Islamism in general, as well as increase cooperation among all the security institutions operating in Central Asia—NATO, the CSTO, OSCE, and SCO (possibly also the CICMA)—as a way to achieve this objective. The OSCE summit in Astana was a step toward this end.

The Afghan problem is a key element in many respects for Central Asian security and Kazakhstan's national security. And the summit in Astana graphically demonstrated this. It is extremely important to know and understand the West's strategy and plans regarding this country, which is a source of military-political, religious, and drug threats. In the geopolitical context, the situation in Afghanistan affects the security of a much broader region that includes South Asia, the Middle East, the CIS, and the PRC. From the very beginning, Astana has suggested including the states located along the perimeter of the Organization's geographic zone and on which the security of the participating states depends as OSCE partners in this process. Pakistan is a country that holds the keys to settling the Afghan problem and on which Central Asia's security to one extent or another depends.

In 2011, chairmanship in the Organization will go to Lithuania. It stands to reason that Vilnius will shift the accent in the OSCE's activity toward its own region—Central and Eastern Europe. It is very likely that such issues as Eastern Partnership of the European Union, the Belarusian Question, relations between the European Union and Russia, supplying Europe with energy, and so on will be put on the agenda.

The EU countries will try to shift the OSCE's geopolitical activity toward Europe and European security. There are indeed many problems in this area: the fate of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe, deployment of the U.S. AMD theater of operations, the fate of the European Security Treaty, and several others. It should be noted that Astana also addressed these topics during its chairmanship. Despite the future strong influence of the European factor, Kazakhstan, like the Central Asian countries as a whole, can continue to use the OSCE Astana Declaration of 2010 as an effective political tool. It is to the historical credit of the Astana OSCE summit that it designated this problem within the Organization's framework and pointed out ways to resolve it.

Another set of problems is associated with relations between Kazakhstan (and the Central Asian countries as a whole) and the European Union. Kazakhstan's relations with the European Union are rather specific. Technically speaking, many foreign partners think Kazakhstan belongs to Asia; and from time to time Astana also emphasizes this aspect of its geopolitical identity. However, at the doctrine level, Kazakhstan is positioning itself as a Eurasian state (for which it has every objective reason).

When talking about the strategy and tactics of Kazakhstan and the other Central Asian countries with respect to the EU, we should proceed from an understanding of the nature of Europe's interest in cooperating with the region and the interests the EU and CA have in common. It stands to reason that the European Union is interested in Central Asia as a stable source of natural resources. At the same time, Brussels is interested in applying its standards to the region. On the other hand, as NATO members, the European countries play an important role in combating the threats coming from Afghanistan. Moreover, the EU does not welcome the U.S.'s dominating role in Eurasia and tends to reckon with Russia's role in the region. Experts have recently been saying that the European Union in particular can act as a counterbalance in the future (since Russia has removed itself from this role) to China's growing domination in Central Asia. All these factors should be kept in mind when forming the position of the Central Asian countries regarding the EU.

In these conditions, Kazakhstan's policy aimed at stabilizing Afghanistan and the situation in the region as a whole is objectively a policy that protects the European Union's direct interests, primarily in the security sphere.

In its relations with the European Union, Kazakhstan will have to keep in mind the fact that the EU is undergoing significant internal transformation at present, which affects essentially all areas of cooperation between this organization and the outside world. At present, the EU's activity in the external vectors is being hampered by the acute budget deficit crisis in the South European countries (Greece, Spain, Portugal, and Italy), since all of the European Union's available resources have been directed toward helping these countries.

During Germany's chairmanship in the EU, an attempt was made to re-examine the entire range of relations with the CIS countries. In so doing, the EU's new foreign policy was far from always successful. The EU was unable to enter a new agreement on partnership and cooperation with Russia or remove the contradictions in the Organization's policy toward the Ukraine, Belarus, and the Caucasian and Central Asian states. What is more, certain contradictions and even rivalry for control over the transportation of hydrocarbons from the CIS countries were designated between the old and new EU members. In addition, the EU's strategy aimed at establishing control over traditional and alternative sources of resources is inevitably encountering (and this is an irreversible process) other foreign competitors—the U.S., Japan, China, and India.

Keeping in mind the EU's growing interest in the region, Kazakhstan should use different tools and methods for putting pressure on its powerful partner. The attention of European partners must be directed toward the shortcomings and weak spots in Europe's strategy toward Central Asia. For example, the EU is not taking the threats (religious radicalism, drug trafficking, illegal migration, and so on) coming from Afghanistan and the vast region to the south of Central Asia seriously enough.

The partners' attention must be directed to the fact that a political, rather than economic, approach dominates in the EU's Central Asian strategy. The EU's priorities regarding building democracy in the region's countries often change and even contradict each other. The EU traditionally exaggerates the potential of civil society as a driving force behind democratic changes and underestimates the state's role in these issues.

The EU's relations with Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine are being established within the framework of the European Neighborhood and Partnership Instrument and its relations with Central Asia are regulated by the Document on Economic Cooperation and Cooperation in Development, which does not relate to a specific region. So an island is forming in the center of Asia that is regarded neither as "Asia" nor as part of the "European neighborhood," which is creating a basis for unjustified discrimination of the interests of Kazakhstan and other Central Asian countries. In addition, Kazakhstan must ensure that the visa regime for its citizens is simplified as much as possible. In trade relations, Astana must promote favorable changes for Kazakhstan in the EU's tariff policy with respect to some of its export commodities (steel, uranium, and so on). This issue could be tied to specific steps and concessions in the energy dialog between Kazakhstan and the EU.

It appears that the EU will have a long-term impact and that it is here to stay in the post-Soviet expanse, including in Central Asia. So, the EU is still one of the most important geopolitical and geo-economic dimensions determining the future and security of Central Asia.

In its relations with the European Union, Kazakhstan must keep in mind that the EU may lose its dominating position as the main economic center in Eurasia. Moreover, the EU countries are becoming targets of external migration. Extensive transformation processes are occurring in the EU social structure and industry. At the same time, the EU will long remain dependent on Eurasian sources of energy.

Kazakhstan's program "Road to Europe"—that is, as much political and economic integration of the country into the European Union as possible—has little chance of being implemented in current conditions. This is due to the special features of the EU's political culture, its geopolitical and geographic imperatives, and, most important, its prejudiced attitude toward the post-Soviet states. This attitude is clearly shown by the EU's complicated relations with Russia and other CIS states. A key problem for Kazakhstan, Russia, and several other CIS countries is the systemic incompatibility between the states guided by principles of sovereignty and the European Union's integration machinery with its "bureaucratic imperialism."

It is obvious that geopolitical factors and the geo-economic situation will have an impact on the relations between the European Union and Kazakhstan, as well as Central Asia as a whole, in the near future. Here we are referring to the U.S.'s new strategy in Central Asia, the unclear prospects of the development of the military-strategic situation in Afghanistan, the state of relations between Russia and the West, the world economic crisis, the growing significance of energy resources, and food safety. These factors could have both a dynamic and positive influence on relations between Europe and Central Asia, as well as a negative effect on their further development.

### *Conclusions and Recommendations*

In 2011, Kazakhstan will complete its chairmanship in the SCO, which should be crowned by a summit this summer. In this respect, the importance of Kazakh-Chinese relations will abruptly grow.



Much for Kazakhstan (and the other CA states) will depend on the dynamics of China's development and its ability to resolve the arising problems.

It must be recognized that neither the Central Asian countries nor Russia can do anything to prevent China's trade and economic penetration into the region. Moreover, at present China is a more important partner for Central Asia than Central Asia is for China. Today it is utterly clear that cooperation with the PRC is crucial for maintaining positive economic dynamics in the region's states. So China's presence should be made to work in favor of Kazakhstan's socioeconomic development.

This could be accomplished by expanding Kazakh-Chinese cooperation in the non-raw-material branches of the economy. A thorough expert analysis of all the contracts entered with China must be carried out and every effort made to ensure they are transparent. Unfortunately, Chinese labor migration is an objective reality that must be reckoned with. But we are capable of organizing strict registration of migrants and control over their activity.

The only thing that can realistically stop China's advance into the region is to step up the integration processes in Eurasia (the CIS). The establishment of the Customs Union among Russia, Kazakhstan, and Belarus is a significant step forward in limiting China's expansion in the post-Soviet expanse.

China has begun acting as a rival in the region, not only to the West, but also to Russia. China's presence in Central Asia, which is traditionally Russia's zone of influence, is becoming increasingly perceptible. It is very likely that in the near and mid term, China and Russia, either competing with each other or uniting to counteract the West, will become engaged in a fight for the geostrategic space and strategically important minerals of Central Asia and the Caspian region.

The prospects for further cooperation between Kazakhstan and the SCO should be viewed from the perspective of intensifying cooperation and achieving the following strategic objectives: stepping up regional integration processes as an important factor in reducing the negative manifestations of globalization; assisting in ensuring regional security in CA; conducting a policy aimed at intensifying regional integration; attracting the monetary resources of other states of the Organization to implement economic projects in Kazakhstan; protecting the SCO countries from the impact of external economic crisis phenomena, as well as their consequences; further strengthening Kazakhstan's relations with the SCO states; and increasing its participation in regional structures. There is no doubt that an effective fight against terrorism and drug trafficking can be organized within the framework of the SCO.

In customs relations, the procedure for crossing the SCO's internal borders and registering transportation documents must be simplified as much as possible. Increasing access to foreign markets, including in the SCO countries, is extremely important for the country's further development. More rational use of the region's transportation and transit potential and formation of a transportation service market should become the main ways to solve this task. In order to raise the efficiency of freight and passenger traffic, a common tax system for transportation means and services should be drawn up.

The crisis processes going on in the financial markets of Europe and the U.S. are dictating the need to take countermeasures not only at the national, but also at the supranational level. In this respect, the SCO countries must be economically protected. For this, the Kazakh side suggests creating a Regional SCO Center for monitoring the state of the world financial markets and macroeconomic processes. Space research might be a qualitatively new and promising vector of Kazakhstan's activity in the SCO.

It is obvious that the only way to show how efficiently the Organization is operating and how important it is for the region is to strengthen economic cooperation in the SCO. The first step in this direction might be to create an SCO Investment Bank. There is also the question of how China might join the integration structures that already exist in the Central Asian region and within the CIS.

The Afghan problem is a key element in many areas for Central Asian security and Kazakhstan's national security. It is important to understand the West's strategy toward this country.

The U.S. has long been talking about the possibility of sending a Kazakh contingent to Afghanistan, particularly in the context of Kazakhstan's chairmanship in the OSCE. It should be kept in mind that such a step could have certain political repercussions, both in domestic policy and in terms of its negative impact on Kazakhstan's international status. Moscow's extremely negative reaction to this development of events is already obvious. On the other hand, Kazakhstan, like the other Central Asian states, cannot stand impartially by and watch the situation in Afghanistan deteriorate should the destabilizing effect from the withdrawal of U.S. and NATO troops escalate.

Evidently the answer to this problem lies in intensifying Kazakhstan's and the CA countries' cooperation with the nations whose responsibility in Afghanistan will automatically rise after evacuation of the Western forces. These nations include (in addition to Pakistan) China, India, Iran, and Russia. The Central Asian states only have the CSTO and SCO, which also need institutional fortification and strategic reformation, at their disposal as tools for strengthening their own security. Kazakhstan also has such a political tool as the OSCE Astana Declaration, which makes it possible to initiate measures in Eurasian security, including regarding the Afghan problem, which one way or another affects most of the OSCE members.

In 2011, the Republic of Kazakhstan is chairing (technically) the Council of Foreign Ministers of the OIC. The tempestuous events in several Arab countries at the end of 2010 and beginning of 2011 will inevitably have an impact on the activity of the OIC and Kazakhstan's chairmanship.

Retaining stability in the direct geographical proximity and in the sphere of Kazakhstan's geopolitical interests—Central Asia, Afghanistan, XUAR, Iran, and the Caspian-Caucasian region—is the primary task for Kazakhstan's security. It is also important that, in addition to Kazakhstan, other CIS republics are also members of the OIC and the Russian Federation is an observer.

So Kazakhstan's chairmanship in the Council of Foreign Ministers of the OIC in 2011 is aimed at keeping the Organization of the Islamic Conference clear of conflict-prone political processes. At the same time, as chairman of the Council of Foreign Ministers, Astana can concentrate on stepping up activity in such vectors as economic cooperation, public health, cultural and humanitarian cooperation, and interconfessional and intercivilizational cooperation.

Chairmanship in the OIC will make it possible for Kazakhstan to actively assist in resolving the problems associated with Afghanistan, Iran's nuclear program, and the water shortage.

Kazakhstan must intensify cooperation in the oil and gas industry. In this respect, Qatar's experience in the gas sphere is interesting, since the production of liquefied natural gas will provide Kazakhstan with access to new markets and allow it to possess innovative technology that has still not been introduced into practice.

In trade and economic cooperation, it would be expedient to initiate talks on developing an open system of trade, investments, technological exchange, and economic cooperation for the OIC zone (possibly within the framework of a multilateral agreement). In the public health sphere, the session of the Council of Foreign Ministers of the OIC may (on Kazakhstan's initiative) intensify cooperation in children's health care and in combating polio and epidemic diseases (within the framework of OIC resolution No. 3/36).

In cultural-humanitarian, interconfessional, and intercivilizational cooperation, it would be expedient to adopt an OIC resolution (addressed to the U.N. and OSCE) on the Organization's support of the idea of creating an international institute (center) in Astana for developing a dialog among the world religions.