

Two decades of global initiatives

Strong commitment to the shared objectives of the international community

Kazakhstan has sought to live up to its international responsibilities from the first days of nationhood

Since becoming an independent nation two decades ago, Kazakhstan has demonstrated unfailing commitment to the shared objectives of the international community; often punching above its weight in the diplomatic arena as it seeks consensus through bodies like the United Nations to launch ambitious initiatives to bolster global stability and security. The occasion of the country's twentieth anniversary of independence provides a timely opportunity to chart Kazakhstan's regional and international initiatives and to assess their impact.

Kazakhstan has sought to live up to its international responsibilities from the first days of nationhood: it is important to remember that the country was a significant testing site for the Soviet Union, as well as a first line of defence for the bloc's southern flank: it inherited some 2,000 nuclear warheads, suddenly making it the world's *de facto* fourth nuclear power. The new administration took the bold step of removing the weaponry immediately, making a significant contribution to global security and pointing the way for future defence policy. Since then, the country has been at the forefront of the movement to end worldwide nuclear proliferation.

Similarly, Kazakhstan has taken a consensus-based approach to regional and international affairs since the first days of the country's nationhood: recognising the need for the region's countries to work together. In the immediate aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Union, Kazakhstan's President Nursultan Nazarbayev initiated the formation of the Commonwealth of Independent States. We need only look at the terrible events in the Balkans a few years later to imagine the catastrophic global consequences of widespread territorial and ethnic disputes among Russia's former satellite nations.

During this early, crucial period Kazakhstan successfully established the demarcations of its borders with Russia and China, an achievement that should be seen in the context of decades of tension between the former USSR and China over this sensitive issue.

In 1996, building on the confidence and trust it had established with its two powerful neighbours, Kazakhstan initiated what would become the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, which now includes Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. Its six full members account for 60 per cent of the landmass of Eurasia and its population makes up a quarter of the planet.

In June 2005, at its fifth and watershed summit in Astana, Kazakhstan, with representatives of India, Iran, Mongolia and Pakistan attending an SCO summit for the first time, the president of the host country, Nursultan Nazarbayev, greeted the guests in words that had never before been used in any context: "The leaders of the states sitting at this negotiation table are representatives of half of humanity."

By 2007 the SCO had initiated over twenty large-scale projects related to transportation, energy and telecommunications and held regular meetings of security, military, defence, foreign affairs, economic, cultural, banking and other officials from its member states. The SCO has now established relations with the United Nations, where it is an observer in the General Assembly, the European Union, ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations), the Commonwealth of Independent States and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation.

CICA: representing half of humanity

The early years after the Cold War saw the rapid emergence of a multi-polar system that linked countries economically and politically – the process that has come to be called *globalisation*. Alongside economic development and the spread of democracy, globalisation has led to the internationalisation of new challenges and threats to democracy, among them terrorism. In the early 1990s, there was no proper mechanism to address the questions of attaining peace, security, and stability in Asia and the surrounding region.

In response, in October 1992, barely six months after joining the United Nations, and after intensive diplomatic efforts with key regional players, President Nazarbayev launched Kazakhstan's most important diplomatic initiative to date: the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia, or CICA. The idea of creating such a mechanism had been mooted several times, but had always failed to garner the necessary support. With the end of the Cold War and the resulting rapid changes in geopolitical and geo-economic realities, CICA was now supported by Asia's leading nations.

Kazakhstan and its partners in the initiative understood the enormity of the task they faced in terms of the long-standing political, economic, religious,

ethnic, and cultural differences in this vast region. But after a series of building-block meetings, by 1999, the first meeting of CICA Ministers of Foreign Affairs was held in Kazakhstan's former capital of Almaty, which now houses the CICA Secretariat. The first CICA Summit Meeting took place there in 2002, attended by leaders from Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, China, Egypt, India, Iran, Israel, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Pakistan, Palestine, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkey, and Uzbekistan who all signed the CICA Charter. Another five countries: Thailand; South Korea; Jordan; the UAE; and Qatar, later joined; and at the Istanbul Summit in 2010, Vietnam and Iraq were admitted.

Based on the principle of confidence-building measures at CICA's next meeting of Foreign Ministers in 2004, the organisation agreed on ways of implementing measures in the following areas: military and political; the fight against challenges and threats to security; economic; and humanitarian. Given CICA's diversity, the decision has been taken to use the confidence-building-measure approach to tackle security issues first, with particular regard to their economic, ecological, and humanitarian impacts.

At the Third Foreign Ministers' Meeting in 2008, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon welcomed the participants, highlighting the important role CICA was playing in establishing dialogue and strengthening cooperation in the region.

OSCE Chairmanship

In 2010, after heading the first two-year presidency of CICA, Kazakhstan handed over to Turkey. Kazakhstan remained in the international spotlight, taking over the Chairmanship of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

Examining the direction, activities, and priorities of the Kazakh chairmanship provides insights into the challenges facing the OSCE and its member states. As the first Central Asian, post-Soviet, and predominantly Muslim state to lead the OSCE, the Kazakh chairmanship represents a landmark event. Kazakhstan sees this position as a strategic national project allowing the country to develop closer ties with both Europe and the United States while also contributing to broader Eurasian security and prosperity.

In his January 14, 2010, video address marking Kazakhstan's assumption of the OSCE chairmanship, President Nazarbayev defined the motto of the chairmanship as the "four T's"—trust, tradition, transparency, and tolerance. The then OSCE Chairman-in-Office, framed the priorities for Kazakhstan's 2010 chairmanship in addressing specific OSCE issues such as the resolution of protracted conflicts, the reconstruction of Afghanistan, countering terrorism, and other transnational threats, enhancing

Eurasian transportation, and promoting inter-ethnic and inter-religious understanding. It was also stated that Kazakhstan would continue the OSCE's assessment of measures to improve the current security architecture in Europe, mentioning in particular a new draft security treaty proposed by Russian president Dmitry Medvedev in November 2009. To achieve these aims, Kazakhstan pushed for a Summit – the first since 1999.

The Astana Summit, held in the Kazakh capital of Astana during the first two days of December 2010, brought together Heads of State and Government and other top officials from the 56 OSCE participating States and 12 Partners for Co-operation, as well as from other international and regional organizations. The Summit was the OSCE's first since the Istanbul Summit in 1999 and was seen as a model in efficient organisation.

The leaders at the Summit adopted the "*Astana Commemorative Declaration: Towards a Security Community*" that reaffirmed their commitment to OSCE principles. President Nazarbayev described the two-day Summit as "an historic event for the entire OSCE community" that had been characterized by "the spirit of Astana".

"We realize that the way to a true Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian community with united and indivisible security will be long and thorny," he said, adding that by implementing the commitments made in Astana, participating States would prove the vitality of the Organization.

A commitment to working within the United Nations

On October 24, 2011, Kazakhstan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs held a roundtable devoted to United Nations Day and the 20th anniversary of Kazakhstan's independence, bringing together representatives of state bodies, the diplomatic corps and UN agencies.

Addressing delegates, Kazakh Foreign Minister Yerzhan Kazykhanov pointed out that over the years of its UN membership, Kazakhstan's international initiatives have been put forward from the UN rostrum. Highlighting the importance of Kazakhstan's membership of the UN, he quoted President Nursultan Nazarbayev: "Our membership not only reaffirmed a commitment to the fundamental principles of international law, but also brought us under the protection of the world's leading international body, and which has accepted the major task of ensuring security in the world."

The diplomatic achievements of the last two decades have earned Kazakhstan respect around the globe, along with a recognition amongst the international community that it will continue to work within established frameworks, while seeking to create new approaches to guaranteeing peace and stability. **E**

As the first Central Asian, post-Soviet, and predominantly Muslim state to lead the OSCE, the Kazakh chairmanship represents a landmark event