

# Visionary national leadership

By THE LATE RT HON LORD FRASER OF CARMYLLIE QC

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PETER FRASER was Chairman of the British-Kazakh Society. Following a successful legal and political career he was created a life peer in 1989.

It can be argued persuasively not only that Kazakhstan has an important global and regional role but also that the leadership understands the benefits and advantages of multilateralism and regionalism. Kazakhstan provides a regional approach based on ‘competition not rivalry.’ Kazakhstan’s regional leadership and stable international relations were clearly demonstrated by Kazakhstan’s masterly chairmanship of the OSCE.

Much of the credit must go to President Nursultan Nazarbayev. He forged a disparate and nomadic people into a cohesive nation in a remarkably short time. And there may have been some eyebrows raised when he drove forward his plans for the establishment of the new Astana as the capital of Kazakhstan, but no longer. This city has some of the finest buildings in the world.

Kazakhstan has been blessed with vast reserves of oil and gas but it quickly learnt that this resource alone was not the route to salvation. In the course of one year oil prices rose to over US\$140 per barrel before slumping to under US\$40 per barrel. That volatility induces nightmares in any nation with fiscal responsibility and Kazakhstan was no exception but it learnt fast that *diversity* had to be the way forward. All over the world *diversity* became the buzzword but there was the distinct belief in Kazakhstan that this was the correct route to pursue.

In one unfortunate sense Kazakhstan was lucky. As a hangover from the Soviet era much of the infrastructure was elderly and creaking and needed to be replaced which is now being implemented. This process brings jobs straight away but more to the point leaves Kazakhstan well-poised for the future as the global economy recovers.

Apart from oil and gas, Kazakhstan has a potentially massive extractive industry but again this is a mixed blessing if the country becomes overreliant on this sector. Kazakhstan’s economy needs to be renewable and sustainable and the obvious focus for this is the agriculture sector – no modern economy survives without this valuable resource. The countryside needs to be more than an extended nature reserve or gamepark – valuable as those are to the rounded character and culture of a nation but there need also to be farms and food. At the bleakest end of the spectrum it is argued that a national failure to achieve self-sufficiency may bring down any nation.

Kazakhstan should have no concerns on that score. President Nazarbayev and his team are right to give a clear emphasis to agriculture and access to water is all important.

It is interesting to note that in Kazakhstan with its abundance of energy reserves, detailed and sophisticated research is already underway on alternative sources. One feature of Kazakhstan, however, surprises me. In Soviet times it held the biggest depository of nuclear weapons, yet nuclear weapons were renounced on independence. Some cynically thought this was only because the former Soviet weaponry was out-dated and dangerous and others simply did not believe that in this vast country a number had not been hidden.

However, as most of the world shudders at the prospect of an Iranian nuclear bomb or a North Korean one, it might have been expected that the enlightened Kazakh approach to nuclear weapons decommissioning would be better known around the world. I no longer suspect a number of nuclear weapons are hidden away, but Ambassador Kairat Abusseitov’s considerable powers of persuasion have been deployed effectively on highlighting Kazakhstan’s principled decommissioning of its nuclear arsenal. **F**

## In Memoriam

This article was written for FIRST shortly before Lord Fraser died suddenly at his home at Carmyllie on 22nd June 2013 at the age of 68. He was MP for Angus and became a life peer in 1989. He was responsible for the investigation into the Lockerbie bombing during his time as Scotland’s Lord Advocate. He was also a Minister in the Scottish Office and served as a Minister at the DTI and the Department of Energy. Lord Fraser leaves an outstanding record of public service and was a popular figure across the political divide. He was a great friend of Kazakhstan and a strong advocate of establishing close ties with the country. He served as Chairman of the British-Kazakh Society with distinction and will be greatly missed by all his friends and colleagues. **F**