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Yerzhan Kazykhanov

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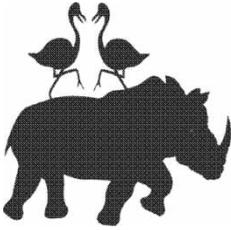
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Yerzhan Kazykhanov

KAZAKHSTAN: THE NPT IS ASYMMETRIC AND NOT EFFICIENT ENOUGH

***Ever since independence Kazakhstan has always been among the leading advocates of reducing the nuclear threat. In 2011 the country hosted the International Forum for a Nuclear Weapons-Free World. In an interview with the Security Index Editor-in-Chief, Vladimir Orlov, Kazakh Foreign Minister Yerzhan Kazykhanov describes the Forum's outcomes, his country's international initiatives in the nonproliferation field, and Central Asian experience of establishing a nuclear weapons-free zone.***

**SECURITY INDEX:** In October 2011 Kazakhstan hosted the International Forum for a Nuclear Weapons-Free World. What are your impressions of its results?

**KAZYKHANOV:** The year 2011 was generally special for Kazakhstan. On December 16 the republic celebrated 20 years of independence. Back on August 29, 1991, shortly before independence, President Nursultan Nazarbayev signed a decree ordering the shut-down of the Semipalatinsk nuclear testing range.

The president demonstrated a lot of courage by taking that step in defiance of huge pressure by the military-industrial complex of the former Soviet Union. He put the will of the Kazakh people first, and the people wanted to put an end to nuclear evil on the long-suffering soil of Semipalatinsk.

It would be no exaggeration to say that the closure of the Semipalatinsk range heralded a new era in the global disarmament process. After Semipalatinsk, nuclear tests were completely halted or suspended at other nuclear testing ranges across the globe. That facilitated the adoption of such a revolutionary document as the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). After the closure of Semipalatinsk the Republic of Kazakhstan voluntarily relinquished the world's fourth-largest nuclear arsenal. In doing so our country made a notable contribution to the cause of strengthening global security.

In December 2009 the UN General Assembly supported Kazakhstan's initiative and unanimously proclaimed August 29 as the International Day against Nuclear Tests.

The closure of Semipalatinsk is not merely a past achievement. It is also a strong symbol of disarmament and progress towards a world free of nuclear weapons. It is a beacon of hope that one day the world will be free of the deadly arsenals which threaten all life on our planet. It is for a good reason that the Semipalatinsk range continues to attract a lot of international attention. In 2010 it was visited by UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, and in 2011 by IAEA Director-General Yukiya Amano and the head of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO), Tibor Tott.

On October 12–13, 2011, the cities of Astana and Semey hosted the International Forum for a Nuclear Weapons-Free World, which was timed to mark the 20th anniversary of Kazakhstan's independence and of the closure of Semipalatinsk.

The forum was attended by heads and senior officials of the IAEA, UN, OSCE, SCO, CSTO, EurAsEC, CICA, UNESCO, CTBTO, and other organizations; leading international politicians who



I N T E R V I E W

have made a notable contribution to the cause of nuclear disarmament and nonproliferation; prominent experts and researchers; representatives of the world's governments and legislatures; members of the Kazakh and international NGOs; and media representatives. I would like to use this occasion to thank the PIR Center and Vladimir Orlov, *Security Index* Editor-in-Chief, for taking part in the forum.

As part of the agenda of the forum the participants visited Ground Zero of the former Semipalatinsk testing range, where statements for the media were made by IAEA Director-General Yukiya Amano, U.S. Deputy Secretary of Energy Daniel Poneman, and the head of the CTBTO Preparatory Commission, Tibor Tott.

Guests of the forum also visited the National Nuclear Center in Kurchatov, took part in the official opening of the renovated memorial to the victims of nuclear tests on Kazakh soil in Semey, and attended a rally to mark the 20th anniversary of the closure of Semipalatinsk.

One of the achievements of the forum was the adoption of the Astana Declaration for a Nuclear Weapons-Free World. The document "recognizes the invaluable contribution to global nuclear disarmament and nonproliferation made by President Nursultan Nazarbayev, who made the historic decision to relinquish the Kazakh nuclear arsenal, which was the world's fourth-largest, and to close one of the world's largest nuclear testing ranges." The declaration also calls on all the countries which possess nuclear weapons to take all necessary steps to achieve a complete elimination of nuclear weapons as soon as possible. It emphasizes the importance of the fulfillment by all NPT members of their obligations under all the articles of the treaty. The declaration was a notable event in the global disarmament process.

The Forum for a Nuclear Weapons-Free World has been yet another Kazakh contribution to global disarmament. I hope that the event has served to re-energize international efforts aimed at achieving a speedy entry into force of the CTBT, the signing of the Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT) and resolving a number of other pressing problems in the area of disarmament and nonproliferation.

**SECURITY INDEX:** Speaking at the Nuclear Security Summit in Washington in April 2010, President Barack Obama praised his Kazakh counterpart, Nursultan Nazarbayev, as "a leader of the international nonproliferation process." He recognized your country's undisputed achievements in strengthening the nonproliferation regime. What are Kazakhstan's current priorities in the area of nuclear nonproliferation and disarmament? And what are the main problems?

**KAZYKHANOV:** President Obama spoke very highly of President Nazarbayev at the Nuclear Security Summit in Washington, describing him as an example for other world leaders on matters of WMD nonproliferation and nuclear security. The two leaders have established good and friendly relations, which helps in the promotion of international anti-nuclear initiatives. The Kazakh president continues to raise the most pressing nonproliferation problems at various international forums, and to call for their resolution.

Speaking once again about the forum in Kazakhstan, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon recorded a video address in which he noted President Nazarbayev's global leadership in the area of nuclear disarmament, and described Semipalatinsk as a symbol of hope. The international recognition of the leading role played by Kazakhstan and its president encourages us to move forward and generate new initiatives which offer solutions to the latest challenges.

For example, Kazakhstan has offered to host on its territory the IAEA international bank of low enriched uranium, and submitted an official proposal to that effect to the IAEA.

We believe that building up additional low enriched uranium (LEU) reserves under the IAEA auspices will offer extra assurances of access to nuclear fuel for all countries, without any prejudice to the inalienable right of every NPT member to develop peaceful nuclear energy in full compliance with all IAEA requirements.

Unfortunately, very little progress is being made in the area of disarmament and in strengthening the nonproliferation regime. Despite the existence of the NPT, the world has not managed to put an end to unceasing attempts by some countries to develop nuclear weapons; neither has it



stopped efforts by countries which already possess these weapons of mass destruction to make them even more deadly.

As an active participant in the disarmament process, Kazakhstan believes that, to our great regret, the NPT is not very effective; in addition, it is also asymmetric. The international community urgently needs to develop clear mechanisms to deal with those countries which possess nuclear weapons but fail to comply with NPT requirements, and to prevent the exit of some members from the treaty. We need to achieve unconditional compliance by all members with their obligations under the three pillars of the treaty: nonproliferation, peaceful use of nuclear energy, and disarmament.

Speaking at the 62nd session of the UN General Assembly, President Nazarbayev called on the nuclear weapon states “to undertake, within the UN framework, measures to ensure the effectiveness of the NPT and bring its provisions up-to-date with the current situation in order to strengthen the nuclear nonproliferation regime.”

Speaking at the 66th session, President Nazarbayev also said that:

... all countries, especially nuclear-weapon states, must be called to greater account over nuclear weapons reductions and gradual elimination of nuclear arsenals. At this time the countries which possess nuclear weapons provide no clear legal guarantees to non-nuclear weapon states. In this important aspect the NPT is not functioning properly. At this stage nuclear weapons are a catalyst of an arms race rather than a stability factor.

One of the latest Kazakh initiatives, announced at the Global Nuclear Security Summit in Washington in April 2010, was the proposal to launch a broad discussion of a future Global Declaration for a World Free of Nuclear Weapons, which could become the first step towards a Nuclear Weapons Convention. The initiative was also reflected in the Astana Declaration of the Forum for a Nuclear Weapons-Free World held on October 11–13, 2011.

In other words, we are keeping up the tempo of our work in this area.

**SECURITY INDEX:** In 2012 it will be six years since the signing of the agreement on the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons in Central Asia. What can you tell us about the effects of the Central Asian nuclear weapons-free zone on the general security situation in the region and on the nuclear nonproliferation regime?

**KAZYKHANOV:** The fact that the agreement was signed in Semipalatinsk was deeply symbolic for the entire nuclear disarmament process. In March 2009, after all the domestic procedures in the member-states had been completed, Central Asia officially became a Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons. This is the world’s first nuclear-weapon-free zone (NWFZ) that lies entirely in the Northern Hemisphere. It is also the first such zone which has common borders with two nuclear-weapon states.

The only issue which has yet to be resolved in the signing of the Negative Assurances Protocol, which rules out the use or a threat of use of nuclear weapons against the NWFZ member-states by the nuclear-weapon states. Russia and China are ready to sign the Protocol, but the Western nuclear-weapon states, i.e. the United States, Britain, and France, are not. Kazakhstan, with the backing of our NWFZ partners, has initiated consultations with these three states, and we are optimistic about the outcome of that process. We expect to receive the assurances in the not too distant future. Such assurances would clearly demonstrate the commitment of the P5 states to the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons. Each new NWFZ makes us closer to a global zero.

**SECURITY INDEX:** As you’ve noted in 2011 we marked 20 years since the closure of one of the world’s largest nuclear testing ranges in Semipalatinsk—but the CTBT has yet to enter into force. What is your assessment of the prospects for this issue being resolved? What steps does Kazakhstan intend to take in this regard?

**KAZYKHANOV:** The CTBT remains an important component of the global security architecture. We have repeatedly called on the international community to complete the procedures necessary for this important treaty to enter into force. The determination demonstrated by the Barak Obama administration to achieve the treaty’s ratification will clearly give a new impetus to this process in the countries which have yet to ratify. The ratification of the CTBT by the United States would set a powerful example for other countries, and ensure the treaty’s entry into force.



As I have already mentioned, in December 2009 the UN General Assembly supported Kazakhstan's initiative to declare August 29, the date we closed the Semipalatinsk nuclear testing range, as the International Day against Nuclear Tests. The decision obviously serves the purposes of the CTBT. As you know, the infrastructure of the former nuclear testing range in Semipalatinsk has been converted for use as an international peaceful experimental center to resolve sensitive nonproliferation issues. Representatives of other countries have been invited to monitor or participate in various experiments and programs conducted at Semipalatinsk, thereby making a contribution to nuclear nonproliferation. In particular, Kazakhstan is an important part of the international network of seismic monitoring of nuclear tests.

Another Kazakh contribution to the cause of banning nuclear weapons tests comes in the form of events we and our international partners organize as part of the International Day against Nuclear Tests. On August 26, 2010 Astana hosted an international conference devoted to the International Day against Nuclear Tests; on September 9, 2010 the UN General Assembly held a special session in New York. Events organized in 2010 include an international conference on nuclear security and nonproliferation headlined "Nuclear Dilemmas: Present and Future" (August 30, The Hague); an informal plenary session of the UN General Assembly devoted to the International Day against Nuclear Tests (September 2, New York); the International Forum for a Nuclear Weapons-Free World (October 11–13, Astana); and several other events and exhibitions.

**SECURITY INDEX:** As a graduate of the Oriental faculty of the Leningrad State University, a specialist in Arabic studies, and as the Kazakh representative on the Council of Foreign Ministers of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), how realistic do you think is the task of conducting the 2012 conference on establishing a zone free of nuclear weapons in the Middle East? What can the OIC do to make sure that the conference takes place?

**KAZYKHANOV:** Speaking at the Nuclear Security Summit in Washington in April 2010, and at the 3rd summit of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA) held in Istanbul in June 2010, President Nazarbayev reiterated our strong support for the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons in the Middle East.

Facilitating the 2012 conference is one of the priorities of the Kazakh chairmanship of the Council of Foreign Ministers of the OIC in 2011–2012. OIC member-states welcomed the idea of conducting the 2012 conference in the Astana Declaration. They believe that progress on issues of nuclear disarmament and nonproliferation in all their aspects is a key to strengthening international peace and security. The Astana meeting of the OIC foreign ministers also adopted a separate resolution on the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons in the Middle East.

Kazakhstan advocates the establishment of such zones throughout the world, so that one day our whole planet could become one big zone free of nuclear weapons. We are ready to do our utmost to help in the establishment of the Middle East NWFZ.

**SECURITY INDEX:** In the past you served as head of the Multilateral Cooperation Department in the Kazakh Foreign Ministry, and worked at the Kazakh representative office at the UN. Based on this experience, what is your assessment of the effectiveness of the multilateral platforms dealing with disarmament issues? I mean, first of all, the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva (CD) and prospects for FMCT negotiations. If no progress is achieved on the issue of FMCT talks in Geneva, is there any real need to look for other platforms for such talks, as Washington has proposed?

**KAZYKHANOV:** First of all, let me say this: the very fact that such platforms for the discussion of topical issues exist suggests that there is a common understanding of the problems we are facing. The existing forums have a good record of resolving various disarmament issues. As for their effectiveness at this time, including the effectiveness of the Conference on Disarmament, we are facing procedural problems and differences in national approaches to national security.

We believe that the Conference on Disarmament is one of the most important mechanisms for strengthening international security. Despite the difficulties this forum is now facing it has a lot of potential and can make a substantial contribution to the cause of disarmament.

The Conference on Disarmament is the international community's only multilateral forum for disarmament talks. It is unique inasmuch as all decisions require unanimous approval, so that every member's opinion is taken into account.

Despite the existing differences we believe that the FMCT talks should be held only at the Conference on Disarmament, and they should start as soon as possible. The adoption of this

treaty is crucially important for nuclear nonproliferation. Halting the production of fissile materials will make it very difficult for countries to pursue illicit military nuclear programs. It will also improve the situation with controls of the existing material and significantly reduce the risk of nuclear terrorism. Some countries, such as Austria and Mexico, have proposed that the FMCT discussion should be held at some alternative forum. I believe that this would seriously weaken the CD and undermine its authority. Even more importantly, any treaty negotiated at an alternative platform would be inherently weak because it would lack the support of some key countries that have a major role to play in the disarmament process.

**SECURITY INDEX:** Experts and international officials are increasingly talking about the need for practical steps towards implementing Article VI of the NPT. The Final Document of the 2010 NPT Review Conference also calls for such steps to be made. How do you assess the prospects for involving the rest of the P5 states—and potentially all countries which possess nuclear weapons—in the nuclear disarmament process led by Russia and the United States?

**KAZYKHANOV:** This is a complex issue. The nuclear deterrence doctrine was formulated during the Cold War. Apparently it was not without merit, because despite the numerous conflicts all over the world in those decades the world still managed to avoid the use of nuclear weapons and did not sink into the abyss of nuclear war. Nevertheless, the threat of uncontrolled nuclear proliferation remains one of the key challenges of the new century. Unless the international community achieves some breakthrough in this area in the foreseeable future, nuclear proliferation will become irreversible, and the consequences of that don't need explaining. If that happens the nuclear deterrence concept will become completely irrelevant.

We therefore need to understand whether that concept is still useful at all in any way. What is the cause of the gradual proliferation of nuclear weapons? Could it be a direct consequence of the fact that nuclear weapons possession is seen by the nuclear entrants as a means of deterrence, as an arsenal that can provide security against the use or a threat of use of nuclear weapons—not by the nuclear weapon-states perhaps, but by neighbors in the region which have acquired nuclear weapons or are on the brink of acquiring them? We are witnessing a very worrying trend whereby nuclear weapons are turning from an instrument of global deterrence (and, by extension, global security) into an instrument of regional deterrence, and in the broader sense, an instrument for resolving regional problems. As the number of nuclear actors increases, the threat of a sudden use of nuclear weapons grows exponentially.

We will also face a growing threat of nuclear materials and other types of WMD falling into the hands of terrorists.

So the key question we need to answer is whether nuclear deterrence is a guarantee of global security, or whether it is increasingly becoming a threat in itself. Opinions differ. Some nuclear weapon states continue to advocate nuclear deterrence, whereas many other countries believe that the concept is a relic of the Cold War, and no longer serves its purpose. They believe that global security requires total elimination of nuclear weapons and universal disarmament.

The Republic of Kazakhstan is inclined towards the latter opinion. We believe that there is no alternative to steadily reducing the size of nuclear arsenals; securing a commitment by all members of the international community to stop horizontal and vertical proliferation; containing proliferation; and facilitating non-discriminatory peaceful use of nuclear energy and nuclear technologies under full IAEA supervision.

It may well be that only radical and rapid nuclear reductions by nuclear weapon states, and a clear demonstration of their commitment to a global zero can persuade countries which have acquired nuclear weapons since the signing of the NPT—or which are trying to acquire them—to disarm and relinquish their military nuclear programs.

**SECURITY INDEX:** The Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) is the largest defense alliance in the former Soviet space. What is your assessment of that organization's role in the Eurasian security architecture? And what kind of future awaits the CSTO?

**KAZYKHANOV:** The signing of the Collective Security Treaty was a timely and necessary step. The treaty has already demonstrated its usefulness, and it still has a lot of potential for many years to come. As we all know and remember, in Soviet times all the Soviet armed forces and the Soviet defense industry were a centrally commanded and controlled system. After the collapse of the



Soviet Union everything started to fall apart, and to some degree even the army fell prey to anarchy; various armed conflicts broke out in many of the former Soviet republics.

There was a real threat of armed border conflicts spreading between the newly independent states. That is why after the formation of the CIS we faced the need for a treaty that would regulate defense cooperation between our countries and create an effective collective security system to protect our countries from external threats.

Kazakhstan's military security is based on a policy of cooperation and good-neighborly relations with all the countries in the region; equality and non-interference; peaceful resolution of international disputes; no first use of military force; strengthening our country's military capability based on the projected threats; and identifying and using the most effective forms and instruments for neutralizing those threats.

As part of our efforts to built an effective and modern system of national security we also pursue active cooperation with international security structures. Kazakhstan pursues cooperation with the CSTO members in order to strengthen the coalition's military capability, for the purposes of shared security and collective defense in the event of a military aggression.

In this day and age an effective collective security system requires effective mechanisms for countering the new challenges and threats in the area of application of the CST. The efforts being undertaken include adapting the CSTO to the changing political environment and to the standards expected of any versatile international security organization.

I believe that, on the whole, the task of effectively countering modern challenges and threats can be accomplished only through the joint efforts of the entire international community. Based on this notion, the CSTO pays particular attention to strengthening mutually beneficial cooperation with specialized structures of other regional and international organizations.

New challenges and threats such as international terrorism and religious extremism, illegal migration, drug and arms trafficking, and other types of transnational crime require joint efforts by the UN, SCO, CIS, EurAsEC, CSTO, and other organizations, which all have their own individual programs to counter those threats.

Consolidating the potential of all these organizations to strengthen international security, with active participation of the CSTO, would help us to build an effective collective security system on the Eurasian continent.

**SECURITY INDEX:** This interview is to be published in the 100th issue of the *Security Index* journal. What do you think has been the greatest achievement of the nuclear nonproliferation regime over the past 20 years? And what are the key changes you expect the regime may undergo over the next 20 years?

**KAZYKHANOV:** Although the international disarmament process is clearly undergoing a period of stagnation, there have also been some notable achievements over the past two decades. They include the already mentioned closure of the nuclear testing range in Semipalatinsk, which triggered similar moves across the planet. The three countries which inherited large nuclear arsenals—i.e. Kazakhstan, Ukraine, and Belarus—have voluntarily relinquished those arsenals, which have now been completely dismantled. Another achievement was the signing of the CTBT in 1996. The United States and Russia agreed substantial nuclear reductions in the New START treaty signed in 2010. Finally, we have a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the centre of Eurasia, in the very part of the world which hosted nuclear weapons and saw nuclear tests a mere two decades ago.

Making forecasts is an ungrateful task. But I would like to hope that over the next two decades the leading world

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powers will fully realize their responsibility for the future of humankind, and that we will see great progress towards a world free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. I hope that not only our children but the current generation as well will live in a world where there is no room left for nuclear weapons.

