

particularly since, as shall be discussed below, no other power or powers is in a position to replace Russia. Kazakhstan's dependence was recently underlined by the Russian "blockade" on petroleum supplies to Southern and Eastern Kazakhstan, and by the problems in the Tengiz project with pipeline access in the Russian Federation. The strength of dependence and the absence of alternatives was evident in Nazarbaev's visit to Moscow after the elections in March, during which he signed an array of agreements strengthening co-operative ties with Russia.⁴¹

1993 also witnessed a deterioration in relations with China. Underlying this trend is a fear that China perceives Central Asia as a vacuum into which it can move, and that it is likely to flood the Central Asian states with illegal immigrants in this effort. There is a widespread belief in Kazakhstan that Chinese are already settling illegally in large numbers.⁴² It is noteworthy that Kazakh authorities closed the Chinese market and other Chinese concerns in Almaty in the summer of 1993. Relations have also been troubled by Chinese nuclear tests in Xinjiang in proximity to Kazakh territory.

Problems in the relationship with Russia and a perception of threat from China (shared by other Central Asian states) have strengthened another policy of long standing — that of seeking to enhance co-operation with neighbouring Central Asian states. Kazakhstan began to characterize itself as one of the Central Asian republics in 1992 and has been a strong proponent of an economic union among them. Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan concluded an agreement on the subject in January 1994 that envisaged the free movement of goods, services, capital, and labour between the two countries by the year 2000. Kyrgyzstan joined a week later.

Farther afield in the region, Kazakhstan has also sought to consolidate durable relations of mutual benefit with Turkey and Iran. The motivations are clear. First there is a hope that building these linkages can balance the pull of Russia to some extent, while reducing the isolation of Kazakhstan. Second, there is a strong interest in exploring the possibility that these countries might provide an outlet for Kazakhstan's exports as an alternative to the above-discussed infrastructural

⁴¹ In a recent interview concerning the agreements, Nazarbaev put forward a vision of Russian-Kazakh relations in terms of the European model — a customs banking, and payments union, defence co-operation, convergence of legal structures, the creation of a common parliament, and the gradual formation of a supranational bureaucracy on the basis of the consultative and co-ordinating committee of the CIS. See "Suverennyi Kazakhstan," *op.cit.* (note 20).

⁴² Interviews in Almaty in June 1993 and also Bess Brown, in *RFE/RL Research Report III*, no. 1 (January, 1994), pp.62-3.