

INTRODUCTION

Kazakhstan, although distant, is of significant interest to Canada in at least six respects. First, it is one of four nuclear successor states of the former Soviet Union. Although, like Ukraine and Belarus, it is slated for denuclearization, it differs from Ukraine in that its approach to the question of nuclear disarmament has been much more co-operative, giving good reason to believe that its prospects for nuclear disarmament are very promising. Successful completion of gradual denuclearization, however, presumes political stability throughout the process, as well as stable continuity of good relations between Russia and Kazakhstan. Increasing influence of more radical Kazakh nationalists might delay, if not halt altogether, the process, as would any significant deterioration in the relationship with Russia.

This brings me to a second point. There is at least some potential for serious tension between Russia and Kazakhstan, particularly given the increasing influence of Russian nationalism. The Russian right has accepted neither the finality of the dissolution of the Russian empire, nor the specific territorial dispensation between Russia and Kazakhstan. The population of Northern Kazakhstan is predominantly Russian. Relations between the Russian population of this area and the government in Almaty are tense. During the Soviet era, the economy of Northern Kazakhstan was closely integrated into that of Western and Central Siberia. The disruption of these linkages has caused significant difficulties for enterprises (and their employees) on both sides of the border.

Likewise, there is some potential for conflict between Kazakhstan and China. The independence of Kazakhstan and the other Central Asian states, and the associated rise of "Turkic self-consciousness" among the indigenous populations of the republics, has important potential ramifications for China, since it may induce a similar politicization of ethnicity among Kazakh, Uighur, and Mongol populations in Xinjiang and Inner Mongolia.

Fourth, the deterioration of the structure of authority and the deepening economic recession have encouraged a return to traditional cultivation of poppies for the production of opium. Kazakhstan and the other Central Asian republics are re-entering the world narcotics market, both as producers in their own right and as conduits for opium originating in Afghanistan.

Fifth, since its independence, Kazakhstan has played an important stabilizing role in the international relations of Central Asia. The broader region is one of considerable economic potential to the West. Moreover, the conflict in Tadzhikistan