



**INSTITUTE OF  
STRATEGIC STUDIES**

web: [www.issi.org.pk](http://www.issi.org.pk)  
phone: +92-920-4423, 24  
fax: +92-920-4658

*Report – Public Talk*

# **Kazakhstan-Pakistan Relations: Priorities of Kazakh Foreign Policy**

**November 30, 2018**



*Rapporteur: Ume Farwa*

*Edited by: Najam Rafique*

## PICTURES OF THE EVENT



The Institute of Strategic Studies (ISSI) organized a Public Talk under its Ambassadors Platform on *Kazakhstan-Pakistan Relations: Priorities of Kazakh Foreign Policy*, on November 30, 2018. The distinguished speaker at the Platform was Ambassador, Republic of Kazakhstan, H.E. Mr. Barlybay Sadykov. Eminent scholars, diplomats and academicians also graced the occasion with their presence.

In his introductory remarks, Chairman BOG ISSI, Ambassador (Retd) Khalid Mahmood said that this event is a part of the celebration of independence of Kazakhstan. He described Kazakhstan as a friendly country which enjoys a special status in international community. He stated that it is the largest land-locked country in the world, endowed with huge oil and gas reserves. With prime geographical location, the Ambassador opined, Kazakh leadership is focused on developing the country and weaving a web of connectivity with its neighbouring countries. Also, he emphasized, it has been playing an important role on many regional multilateral forums such as Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA). For Pakistan, the Chairman highlighted, Kazakhstan is of special importance in the context of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. Pakistan was one of the first countries that recognized Kazakhstan. The nature of Astana-Islamabad cooperation encompasses a broad spectrum of security, economic and cultural issues.

Elaborating on Afghan conundrum, Ambassador Khalid Mahmood spoke on the significance of Kazakhstan-Pakistan relations. He shed light on Islamabad's rationale of supporting "Afghan-led, Afghan-owned" peace. He shared his views on bilateral cooperation between Pakistan and Kazakhstan on international forums, and explained how these two countries have been supporting each other in many international organizations, for instance, SCO, World Trade Organization (WTO), and United Nations Security Council (UNSC).

H.E. Mr. Barlybay Sadykov expressed his profound gratitude to the Director General ISSI Ambassador Mr. Aizaz Chaudhry and Chairman of the Board of Governors, Ambassador Mr. Khalid Mahmood for organizing this talk on Kazakhstan-Pakistan relations and priorities of foreign policy of Kazakhstan.



He informed the audience of Independence Day of Kazakhstan which is celebrated on December 16. He said that it is the 27th anniversary of Independence of Kazakhstan and on December 1, we celebrate the Day of the First President of Kazakhstan H.E. Mr. Nursultan Nazarbayev, who is in fact the main architect of internal and foreign policy of Kazakhstan. Thanks to his political will and vision, Mr. Barlybay stated, Kazakhstan has successfully avoided internal strife, established friendly external relations and created favorable conditions for rapid economic development of the country.

He presented some important statistics on what Astana has achieved so far in 27 years:

- Poverty has been reduced from 46.7% in 1992 to 2.7% in 2017;
- Its literacy rate is 99.7%. and it is one of the highest in the world;
- Kazakhstan is among 10 biggest oil suppliers in the world and number one in the world in uranium production and export, and also one of the leading countries in the world to produce and export wheat flour;
- Kazakhstan attracted more than 300 billion USD of FDI that is more than 70% of all investments made in the countries of Eastern Europe and Central Asia;
- GDP at the highest point was \$US 236 bn and is 60% of GDP of all Central Asian countries combined;
- Kazakhstan is at the 28th place among 193 countries in “Doing Business” rating of the World Bank in 2018.

As a result of successful economic development, Kazakhstan has put for itself an ambitious goal to join the group of 30 most developed economies of the world by 2050.

Ambassador Sadykov said that Pakistan was among the first countries in 1991 which recognized our independence and established diplomatic relations. And it was logical that one of the first state visits abroad of President Nazarbayev was Pakistan back in February 1992. Since that time, Pakistan has always been one of the main foreign partners of Astana in South Asia, and whose role and significance for the world is well-known and undisputable.

Describing the friendly relations between Pakistan and Kazakhstan, Ambassador Sadykov stressed that reestablishment of contacts with South Asia, and Pakistan in particular, is not something new for Kazakhstan or countries of Central Asia. It is more like reestablishment of the relations since peoples of Central and South Asia have been linked for centuries by many historical, cultural, religious, trade and economic relations. These bonds of friendship and invaluable heritage of the past, he said, should be preserved and effectively used to promote relations for the benefit of our peoples.

Regarding Kazakh-Pakistan relations in the modern age, the Ambassador was of the view that we should underline absence of any political or economic disputes or contradictions. This, he said, provides prospects for further work to enhance and qualitatively elevate our relations to new levels and make concrete plans for future cooperation.

Highlighting the contours of Astana-Islamabad relations, Ambassador Sadykov said that it should be noted that the leadership of Pakistan has always paid great attention to Kazakhstan and its foreign policy initiatives. All presidents and prime ministers of Pakistan starting from Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto visited Kazakhstan either on bilateral visit or within the framework of multilateral forums. Mutual exchanges at the level of ministries and agencies, as well as students and business people were high. Recalling his visit to Pakistan back in November 1993 as a young diplomat accompanying a big delegation of Kazakhstan judges from Supreme, Arbitration, Constitutional and all Provincial courts, he shared some cherished memories of the journey and fruitful meetings with leadership of provinces and courts in Islamabad, Karachi, Lahore, Quetta, and Peshawar.

Expressing optimism on bilateral cooperation, he listed some of the high-level visits between the two countries. He spoke about the former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's visit in June 2017 to Kazakhstan to attend the SCO Summit, and President Mamnoon Hussain's visit to Astana in September 2017 to participate in OIC Summit on Science and Technology. He was hopeful that the present government will as well be interested in maintaining and further developing good relations with Kazakhstan and other countries of Central Asia.

Another prove of high level of cooperation between our countries, the ambassador said, is mutual support to initiatives at international forums. For example, in 2011 Kazakhstan supported

candidacy of Pakistan to UNSC for the period of 2012-2013 and in 2016, Pakistan supported candidacy of Kazakhstan to UNSC for the period of 2017-2018. It is also highly appreciated that Pakistan supported the candidacy of Astana city to hold international exhibition EXPO 2017 which became a big political achievement of Kazakhstan. He also mentioned Islamabad's support to Kazakhstan's candidacy to become member of the "Asia-Europe Forum" and WTO.

In fact, the Ambassador stressed, Kazakhstan and Pakistan have close or similar positions on many issues of world politics, and which are the basis for effective interstate cooperation within international and regional organizations – UN, OIC, SCO, ECO, CICA.

According to Ambassador Sadykov, one of the important hallmarks in Kazakhstan-Pakistan relations is the decision taken in Astana in 2017 at the SCO Summit to give Pakistan full membership. He was confident that inclusion of Pakistan in the SCO will substantially strengthen international reputation and effectiveness of the organization in countering global challenges that fully responds to the interests of Kazakhstan.

Regarding bilateral cooperation, he underlined the excellent cooperation in military- defense sphere, and pointed out that:

- The legal basis for cooperation is Kazakh-Pakistan Memorandum of Understanding in military sphere. The main areas which are of great interest are military education, training of Special Forces, and military-technical cooperation. Delegations from both countries visit exhibitions of defense production at KADEX and IDEAS.
- All activities are regulated by the Joint military commission and the 5<sup>th</sup> meeting of the commission will take place in January 2019.
- Kazakhstan is interested in training military personnel in Pakistan. Thirty eight military servicemen from Kazakhstan have undergone training in Pakistan since 2005.
- Kazakhstan is also interested in learning and getting experience from Pakistan in countering terrorism and we deeply appreciate the willingness of Pakistan to cooperate in this field. In November 2017, we jointly conducted the first counter-terrorism exercises in Pakistan. The second one will be held in 2019 in Kazakhstan.

At the same time, the Ambassador stated, we have to acknowledge very low level of trade and economic cooperation. USD 28 million trade turnover in 2017 is not corresponding to the level and character of our political cooperation.

Speaking about trade and agricultural cooperation, he highlighted the possibility of Kazakhstan exporting energy resources, electricity, products of metallurgical complex, agricultural products and import textile, leather products, medical equipment, and pharmaceuticals. He added that Kazakhstan is initiator and founding member of Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) comprising Kazakhstan, Russian Federation, Belarus, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan with a market of 180 million people and with road access to Kazakhstan through China via Karakorum Highway. For him, the prospects of Pakistan exporting its product to such a big market were high and bright.

Ambassador Sadykov said that Pakistan's products will be very competitive, especially its agricultural products, particularly vegetables and citrus products, since there is a 6-8 month of winter season in Central Asian countries and there is big deficit and dire need of such products which are presently imported from Latin America and Africa.

He emphasized that the two countries should enhance institutional cooperation, and Joint Intergovernmental Commission on Trade and Economic, Scientific-Technical and Cultural Cooperation is but one potential avenue.

Turning to the foreign policy of Kazakhstan, Ambassador Sadykov said that the main principles and characteristics of Kazakhstan's foreign policy are based on multi-vector, proactive, balanced and pragmatic approach, predictability, dialogue, compromise and mutual partnership. As a result of such policy, Kazakhstan does not have enemies and has been successful in establishing and maintaining good relations of partnership with all countries. Kazakhstan solved all territorial disputes with the neighbors and borders of Kazakhstan have been delimited and demarcated. Most recently, on August 12, 2018, the governments of five countries have also signed the Convention on the Legal Status of the Caspian Sea.

From the first days of independence, the Ambassador stated, Kazakhstan has firmly promoted the policy of nuclear disarmament and nonproliferation, and nuclear security. Kazakhstan abandoned the fourth most powerful nuclear arsenal in the world and closed one of the largest

nuclear test sites. Kazakhstan, together with countries of the region, has established a nuclear weapon free zone in Central Asia. Kazakhstan also facilitated negotiations on Iran's nuclear program in 2013, and in 2015 opened on its territory an International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) low-enriched uranium bank which provides multilateral approaches to the nuclear fuel cycle.

Upon Kazakhstan's initiative, in 2009, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) adopted a Resolution proclaiming August 29 as an International Day of Actions against Nuclear Testing, and, in 2015, the Resolution on the Achievement of a World Free of Nuclear Weapons.

On January 18, 2018 thematic briefing of the UN Security Council on "Non-Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD): Confidence-Building Measures" was held in New York under the chairmanship of President Nursultan Nazarbayev. The President of Kazakhstan stressed that an atmosphere of mutual trust can contribute to the formation of a new model of international cooperation. The President called for the return to the political trust and systematic dialogue, to strengthen control over the creation and dissemination of new military and information technologies. His appeal is very relevant now in the background of current developments in the field of nuclear disarmament and preserving agreements in that field.

The Ambassador said that according to foreign policy principles, there is no military solution to any conflict or issue, and our President, from the very first days of independence, was actively promoting the concept of ensuring security and solving problems through trust and confidence-building measures. In 1992, the President proposed, at the UNGA, the initiative to convene the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia. Now, this forum comprises 27 states, including Pakistan, which significantly contributes to peace and security in Asia through confidence-building measures.

Kazakhstan firmly believes that tolerance and partnership are the only way to achieve success in the fight against global challenges such as terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, environmental destructions and other acute issues on the agenda of the modern world. Ambassador Sadykov said that President Nazarbayev put forward the initiative of holding Congresses of World and Traditional Religions on triennial basis back in 2003. On October 10-11, 2018 Astana hosted the VI Congress of the Leaders of World and Traditional Religions on



the theme of “Religious leaders for the Safe World” and Pakistan actively participates in that forum.

Following its principle to achieve peace through dialogue, Kazakhstan has been actively involved in mediation in various conflicts:

- Nursultan Nazarbayev held very intensive consultations with the leaders of Russia, Ukraine, United States, Germany, Britain and France to facilitate solution of the crisis in Ukraine in 2014. Through his mediation, the Minsk Agreement had come to light.
- The escalation of the confrontation between Turkey-Russia in 2016 gave rise to the threat of a full-scale military conflict between the two countries. Through personal mediation of President Nazarbayev, the relations between these two countries were normalized. On June 30, 2016, the President of Turkey, Mr. Erdogan, telephoned President Nazarbayev and thanked him for his contribution to the normalization of Russian-Turkish relations.
- Kazakhstan is providing a platform for negotiations on the Syrian crisis. The Astana process - peace talks between representatives of the Syrian government and the armed Syrian opposition with the participation of the UN, Russia, Turkey and Iran is a practical contribution to peace in the region.

Kazakhstan attaches great importance to the role and work of international and regional organizations in promoting peace and security. Kazakhstan is now, for the second year, a non-permanent member of the UNSC for 2017-2018 and represents all countries of Central Asia and contributes to the cause of peace and security through the international organization.

Accentuating Kazakhstan’s efforts in enhancing regional connectivity in economic and security domain, Ambassador Sadykov mentioned that:

- Kazakhstan has been a founding member of the Eurasian Economic Union since 2015, the economic organization that was first proposed by Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev in 1994. It is through this cooperation that our businesses enjoy a free trade area, which stretches for thousands of kilometers across Eurasia, and Pakistan can benefit from it by enhancing cooperation with this organization.

- Kazakhstan is also among the founding members of SCO, and in 17 years of its existence, the organization has acquired international recognition and become a successful platform for multifaceted cooperation. In our view, the potential of this organization has not been fully realized yet. Priority areas of cooperation for Kazakhstan in SCO include trade, and economic and investment cooperation.
- The OIC as the overarching multilateral body of the Muslim world is a strategic dialogue partner in the maintenance of international peace and security, as well as countering emerging challenges and threats across the OIC space and we have a lot of opportunities to increase our cooperation within this organization.
- Realizing that future competitiveness of the Muslim Ummah will depend on the level of our science and technology development. In 2017, Kazakhstan hosted the Summit of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation in Astana which defined further goals and objectives in the field of science, technology, innovation and modernization in the Islamic world.
- Among priorities of foreign policy of Kazakhstan are maintaining and further development of relations of strategic partnership with Russian Federation, China, United States, EU, and Central Asian countries. We have excellent relations with all countries of South Asia, Middle East and Africa.
- Another foreign policy priority of Kazakhstan is developing relations with China. We have a history of many centuries of close relations. We solved all historical border issues, and China granted security assurances in return for our refusal of nuclear arms. High political confidence between Kazakhstan and China is testimony of mutual support of international initiatives. China supported and was Chair of the CICA, and Kazakhstan supported Chinese initiative of BRI which was launched by President Xi Jinping in Astana in 2013. As President Xi Jinping noted during the meeting with President Nazarbayev in Qindao in 2018, our relations are exemplary and serve the benefit of our peoples.

- Developing relations with USA are traditionally one of the priority directions of foreign policy of Kazakhstan. This was demonstrated during the visit of President Nazarbayev to USA in January 2018 which not only enriched bilateral trade and economic cooperation, but also confirmed commitment of both sides to development of multifaceted political dialogue.

Talking about Afghanistan, Ambassador Sadykov highlighted Kazakhstan's efforts for peace and reconciliation in Afghanistan. On January 19, 2018 the Kazakhstan delegation to the UN Security Council organized a ministerial level debate on "Building a regional partnership in Afghanistan and Central Asia as a model for the interdependence of security and development". Although the peace process should be Afghan-led and Afghan-owned, but at the same time, building peace in Afghanistan is a shared responsibility of all regional and global players. They must facilitate a reconciliation process to find a politically negotiated settlement. Kazakhstan supports efforts to stabilize Afghanistan and believes that all parties should facilitate the launch of peace talks as soon as possible.

Ambassador Sadykov concluded his lecture by saying that the relations with Pakistan are of great importance for Kazakhstan. The two countries are enjoying excellent relations and we will work to increase our cooperation in all spheres.

The talk was followed by a brief question and answer session.

Replying to a question on how cultural ties and people-to-people contacts could be strengthened, Ambassador Sadykov said that the governments have taken many measures to increase people-to-people contacts and enhance cultural linkages. In this regard, he informed the audience of the easy visa regime as Kazakhstan attaches great significance to the cultural ties which is also very essential to booming eco-tourism in the country.

To another question which was raised in the context of exporting Pakistani products to Kazakhstan and Central Asia, Ambassador Sadykov said the Pakistani products are highly competitive and they can create their own niche in the region.

A participant asked what Pakistan can expect from Kazakhstan regarding its membership of Nuclear Supplier Group (NSG). Elaborating on his country's policies and priorities towards

non-proliferation, Ambassador Sadykov said that Kazakhstan is a staunch supporter of nuclear non-proliferation and President Nazarbayev took many initiatives as a commitment to this cause. Yet, the contemporary age is the era of new technologies, which can be used for many purposes. However, it has many pitfalls as well, such as any human error in the use of nuclear technology can result in a nuclear distrust. In the similar vein, the probabilities of nuclear technology falling in the hands of terrorists is also a grave concern for all those countries that are earnestly trying to prevent any nuclear disaster. Regarding NSG, the Ambassador said it is true that Kazakhstan is a party to NSG, which is a consensus-based decision process. Many questions have been raised lately with regard to membership of new countries. Nonetheless, Kazakhstan supports Pakistan's membership in NSG.

In his concluding remarks, Chairman BOG ISSI, Ambassador Khalid Mahmood thanked Ambassador Sadykov for making such an insightful and comprehensive presentation on his country's foreign policy, as well as its priorities towards Pakistan. He applauded the role Kazakhstan played in international peace and security, and peace and conflict resolution in many regions of the world. He concluded that these mediation initiatives and peace efforts have had a positive impact on global peace.