

Preface by Ambassador Erzhan Kazykhan

Kazakhstan and the United States have much in common, but one of the main connecting threads is the desire of our peoples to be free.

From time immemorial, the Great Steppe was famous for the craving of its inhabitants to be independent and open to the outside world. The centuries-old history of the statehood of the Kazakhs is permeated with bright pages of peaceful creative activity, the firm upholding of their national interests and territory.

At the end of the 18th century, the United States was able to unite the brave American Colonists, whose desire for independence and forward-looking government policies became a solid foundation for the development of their country as a leading world power.

The materials that form the basis of this book originate from the time of Kazakhstan's independence, and describe the events of our recent history. The book contains information on the development and formation of bilateral relations between Kazakhstan and the United States.

The team of authors made great efforts to reflect the results of our joint achievements, difficult negotiations and the often imperceptible routine work of statesmen and public figures of the two countries, as well as representatives of public diplomacy.

One of the important goals of this work is to preserve and pass on the accumulated experience of cooperation and partnership to future generations of Kazakhstanis and Americans. For my part, I would like to draw the readers' attention to several important stages in the development of relations between Kazakhstan and the United States.

Firstly, thanks to American travelers and diplomats, we are aware of ties between our peoples long before the official establishment of diplomatic relations.

Among the famous American researchers who visited the Kazakh land in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries one can note the famous scholar, writer and diplomat, author of the two-volume work "Turkestan," Eugene Schuyler (1840-1890).

Eugene Schuyler is remembered as the first American diplomat to visit Central Asia. In 1867 he was appointed U.S. Consul in Moscow, where he actively combined diplomatic duties with research and travel.

In March 1873 Schuyler left Petersburg for Central Asia accompanied by the eldest son of the last khan of the Bukeev Horde, Chingiz, whom he later described as a "cultured gentleman who deeply knew French literature." During his eight-month stay in Central Asia, Schuyler described a wide range of problems related to the history and ethnography of the peoples of the region, the colonial policy of tsarism in the Kazakh steppe, its economy and overall nature.

In 1876, commenting on the situation in Kazakhstan at that time, Schuyler noted that: "These people stood up for their clans, or families, defending the honor and safety of their members. Honoring at the same time courage, raids, and loving their independence, the Kazakhs were always ready to follow the banner of any *batyr* or hero, be it Sarym, Arungazi or Kenesary."

The American diplomat and scholar also left notes about the architectural monuments of the Kazakh steppe. While in Kazakhstan, Schuyler noted with admiration the architectural features of the mausoleums of Haji Ahmad Yasawi in Turkestan, Karakhan and Aisha-Bibi in Taraz, described the ruins of the ancient city of Tiime-Kent in Moyinkum, and studied local legends, including the unfinished construction Tash-Kurgan.

Despite the brevity of Schuyler's trip to Kazakhstan and Central Asia, his observations were highly appreciated in the United States. As noted by the American historian Frank Siscoe, "Eugene Schuyler was one of the most capable

American diplomats of that period, whose diplomatic and literary careers were distinguished by perceptive and candid reporting.”¹

Another American explorer and expert on Central Asia, **Januarius MacGahan**, (1844-1878) traveled to Central Asia in 1873, and was one of the first Western travelers to describe the endless expanses of the Kazakh land.

The travel notes of the American journalist also testify to the great interest in the life of Kazakh villages and nomadic culture. In particular, MacGahan spoke very warmly about the hospitality of the Kazakh people:

I cannot but notice here that all the time of my stay with the Kazakhs left the most pleasant memory. All of them, without exception, were kind to me, hospitable and honest. I spent a whole month among them, traveling with them, eating with them, and sleeping in their wagons; all this time I had money, a horse, weapons and things that could seduce them like rich prey. And meanwhile, I saw nothing but good from them, not only did not have the slightest trifle disappear from me all the time, but more than once it happened that a Kazakh galloped after me five or six miles in pursuit to return something I had forgotten. Why all these rumors about the need to civilize such a people? Where does all of Vambéry's speculations about the comparative advantages of English and Russian civilization lead to them? Kazakhs are remarkably honest, virtuous and hospitable – qualities that are immediately smoothed out by civilization in all primordial peoples. In my opinion, it is even a pity to instill in such a happy people our civilization with all the accompanying vices.

In the twentieth century, interesting studies about Kazakhstan in the United States are associated with the name of Martha Brill Olcott (b. 1949). In the course of preparing her main work – the monograph *The Kazakhs* (1987) Olcott repeatedly visited Kazakhstan from 1975 onward. Since the beginning of the

¹ Frank G. Siscoe, “Eugene Schuyler, General Kaufman, and Central Asia,” *Slavic Review*, vol. 27 no. 1, 1968, 119-24.

1980s, she regularly published research on the history of Kazakhstan during the Soviet period.

Starting the story from the time of the formation of the Kazakh Khanate, Olcott wrote: "of all the Soviet peoples, the Kazakhs are the ones of whom most westerners think they have heard." In the preface to the second edition, the author noted the following, not without surprise: "When the first edition of this book was published, it was unthinkable that in less than five years Kazakhstan would be a member of the United Nations or that the USSR would have dissolved, making way for fifteen successor states... a complete reworking of the history of the Kazakhs may well be the job of the next generation of scholars."²

The history of modern Kazakh-American relations is permeated with truly significant milestones.

The recognition of Kazakhstan's independence by the United States on December 25, 1991, made it possible to lay a solid foundation for bilateral relations for many years to come.

Relations between states are sometimes similar to relations between people. In both cases the first direct contacts as well as the first decisions, meetings and negotiations can be of exceptional importance. Thus, in his letter to President Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan, President George H. W. Bush, seeking to promote joint work on peace and security, invited the leader of our country to make his first official visit to Washington.

I consider it particularly notable that the very positive American attitude towards the First President of the Republic of Kazakhstan was solidly in place even before the official letter recognizing our Independence was sent.

On December 17, 1991, on his way to the Middle East, U.S. Secretary of State James Baker visited Kazakhstan for the first time since the "August putsch" in Moscow, stopping in Alma-Ata. It was not long after this that Washington observers noted Nazarbayev's key role in the formation of a new economic association in the former USSR. As far away as Salt Lake City the *Deseret News*

² Martha Brill Olcott, *The Kazakhs*, Second Edition, Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1995, pp. i-xviii.

quoted a senior American official who concluded that Nazarbayev had emerged as a “very important” figure on the international scene.

Following the first visit of Kazakhstan’s President to the United States, Embassies were opened in both countries. The U.S. diplomatic mission in Alma-Ata officially opened on February 3, 1992, with William Courtney serving briefly in the role of Chargé d’Affaires and then, from September 15, as U.S. Ambassador. Meanwhile, in Washington the stately former home of the American vice-president James S. Sherman (1909-1912) on 16th Street was transformed into Kazakhstan’s embassy. It immediately became a gathering place for American friends of Kazakhstan and Kazakhstani visitors from diverse fields.

A unique challenge that faced Kazakhstan, but not the United States, is that at the dawn of its independence it was necessary for Kazakhstan’s new leaders to create virtually from scratch whole new official agencies for fields as diverse as security, customs, and the representation of Kazakhstan abroad.

Close cooperation between Kazakhstan and the United States began to develop almost from the first days of independence. This extended to founding a market economy, the development of energy resources, and regional security. Constant interaction also took place in the development of democracy, rule of law and civil society, as well as the implementation of projects in such fields as health care, education, and so forth.

The first American investments were also very important for the economy of Kazakhstan. It is popular today to take note of the fact that deposits of practically every mineral listed in the periodic table of elements can be found in Kazakhstan. However, many people forget that natural resources must not only be extracted, but also stored, processed, and transported to international markets – all the while observing international agreements and standards affecting issues as diverse as working conditions and wages.

Kazakhstan had to address all these tasks for the first time. We stepped out of socialism directly into the wondrous capitalist world. Kazakhstan and America scored some notable successes together but also made our share of mistakes. The

good news is that each side began to learn from its experiences and to incorporate those understandings into their future interactions with the other.

I believe that the main task for the next generations of diplomats of our two countries is not only to maintain the current high level of cooperation, but also to open new chapters of Kazakh-American relations, building on the rich experience of the past.

Kazakhstan today is rightfully considered the leader of the global anti-nuclear movement. This status has been entrenched in our country thanks to the landmark initiatives of Kazakhstan's first Nursultan Nazarbayev. All of these have aimed at preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and promoting their eventual elimination.

At the collapse of the Soviet Union, Kazakhstan inherited the world's fourth largest nuclear arsenal as well as one of the world's largest test sites and infrastructures for the production of the main components of an atomic bomb. Several crucial steps now took Kazakhstan in a radically different direction. Thus, when Kazakhstan decided to close the Semipalatinsk test site it sent an important signal to the entire international community. Kazakhs value the symbolism that August 29, the day the Semipalatinsk test site was closed, was designated by the United Nations as the International Day against Nuclear Tests. This initiative led to the dismantling of several other such test sites around the world. Then, in 1994, President Nazarbayev presented to President Clinton documents ratifying the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of nuclear weapons (NPT). With this action Kazakhstan officially joined the NPT as a non-nuclear-weapon state.

A further important stage was the cooperation between Kazakhstan and the United States under the framework of the Cooperative Nuclear Threat Reduction program initiated by Senators Richard Lugar and Sam Nunn. Thanks to this program, by 1995 not a single nuclear warhead remained in Kazakhstan. Such measures as these firmly secured Kazakhstan's global leadership in the field of nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament.

Not resting its laurels, Kazakhstan continued to push forward with its efforts on behalf of nuclear disarmament. Thus, working with the United States, it undertook Operation Sapphire, as a result of which 600 kg of plutonium were safely removed from the territory of Kazakhstan and transferred to the United States. This operation required high levels of both competence and trust on both sides, then in 1996 Kazakhstan joined the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, a further step towards achieving a world free of nuclear weapons.

During the period of its membership on the UN Security Council (2017-2018), strengthening the global nonproliferation became one of Kazakhstan's main priorities. Finally, Kazakhstan strongly supported the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which it joined in 2018.

A particularly significant step towards a nuclear weapons-free world was the establishment of a nuclear weapons-free zone covering all of Central Asia. The nuclear-free zone agreed upon by the five new states of Central Asia was conceived at Semipalatinsk in Kazakhstan, and is the world's newest nuclear weapon-free zone and the first in the Northern Hemisphere. It is worth noting in this context that Kazakhstan itself shares two of the world's longest borders with major nuclear powers.

A further focus of Kazakhstan's efforts to curtail nuclear weapons is preventing the spread of enrichment technologies that could be used to create nuclear weapons. To address this challenge, Kazakhstan is working closely with the international community to develop internationally safeguarded supplies of low enriched uranium, thereby creating an alternative option for countries that decide not to develop their own capabilities for enriching uranium. To this end, Kazakhstan created on its territory the International Low-Enriched Uranium Bank. This successful project was launched under the auspices of the International Atomic Energy Agency and with support from the United States, European Union, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Norway and the Nuclear Threat Reduction Initiative NGO.

All these tireless efforts to ensure peace and security in the region have also contributed to Kazakhstan's economic viability and growth. By directly addressing the many challenges it faced Kazakhstan has become a leading

economy in Central Asia, attracting more than \$350 billion in foreign direct investment since independence.

Over the past three decades Kazakhstan and the United States have gone through many trials together. After each such crisis, our peoples each time emerged stronger than ever. This leads me very confident that nothing can break the ties that now link us.

It is important to note that our two countries have always come to each other's aid when needed. So it was on September 11, 2001, when the United States endured one of the worst acts of barbarism in the modern era. When Washington declared a global war on terrorism Kazakhstan did not stand aside. As a member of the international coalition against terrorism, Kazakhstan helped to ensure the passage of American non-lethal cargo to Afghanistan. In the same spirit, Kazakhstan undertook peacekeeping efforts in Iraq that consisted of demining and patrolling operations. From 2003 to 2008, Kazakhstani peacekeepers destroyed more than four million explosives and provided medical assistance to 2,500 civilians and military personnel of the international coalition brought together by the United States. And throughout America's presence in Afghanistan Kazakhstan worked on countering drug trafficking, increasing the role of Afghan women, and educating young Afghan citizens who dream of peaceful life in their country.

Symbolizing Kazakhstan-American cooperation in the security sphere has been the Steppe Eagle exercises with the U.S. Armed Forces that have been carried out within the framework of the NATO Partnership for Peace program. The most recent Steppe Eagle exercise in Kazakhstan was held in June 2019, and included participation by military personnel from Great Britain, India, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkey, in addition to those from the Republic of Kazakhstan and the United States.

At important moments Kazakhstan has collaborated with the United States when other countries have hesitated to do so. Such was the case with the U.S. call for countries to accept back, rehabilitate, and reintegrate those of their citizens who had been involved with armed conflict in Syria. Kazakhstan was one of the first and among the few states globally to respond to this request.

Its resulting Operation Zhusan thus represents a new stage of joint Kazakhstan-American cooperation for the purpose of strengthening international and regional security. Now, as both countries deal with the spread of the coronavirus, we have good reason to take pride in our ties and to appreciate how dear our relations have become.

On the eve of the 25th anniversary of bilateral relations, former U.S. Ambassador to Kazakhstan George Krol noted that during his stay in our country, he was “impressed by the dynamics of our strategic partnership and the friendly relations that have existed between our peoples throughout the entire period.” The new U.S. Ambassador, William H. Moser, and the Kazakh embassy in Washington worked together with our respective governments to reach an agreement on enhanced strategic partnership between Kazakhstan and the United States. This step, taken in January 2018, brought our relationship to a qualitatively new level.

In conclusion, I would like to assure the readers that broad interaction with the United States remains one of the most important priorities of the Republic of Kazakhstan. This is underscored by my country’s official Foreign Policy Concept for 2020-2030. In the post-pandemic era, we will continue to strengthen our already extensive ties with the United States, ties that enable us to address together issues as diverse as politics, economics, security, trade, energy, education, health, culture and much more.