In Place of a Conclusion: Love this Country

And so, our story of Kazakhstan, a country stretching across the expanses of Eurasia, is nearing its end. It would be more correct to say it is only just beginning, at least for you, the reader. As the well-known saying goes, it is better to see something once than to hear about it a hundred times, and we would be delighted to see you in the land of the Kazakhs.

Perhaps something from our tale will strike you as exaggerated, while something else may appear understated. Nevertheless, you will be welcomed in any capacity: a curious tourist, potential partner or interested guest.

As you have read, Kazakhstan and its people have lived through a difficult history, which was often excessively harsh on them. The geography and the climate dictated that at the dawn of history the people who settled on this land were forced to fight for their survival. The fight for survival in adverse natural conditions was then supplemented with a struggle against a multitude of opponents. Kazakhstan has experienced the fall of many eras and civilizations, the most poignant of which was the separation from its old nomadic identity. Nevertheless, many of its symbols still survive to this day. The last trauma was only very recently, in 1991, and it still resonates painfully in the hearts of those who were raised on ideas of equality, justice and brotherhood.

However, history waits for no man and time moves inexorably on. Today, Kazakhstan is trying to resolve several challenges simultaneously: to modernize, technically, ideologically and morally, to build a national government and to integrate into the new world of globalization. These objectives are closely interconnected and, at times, they contradict one another.

A transition zone in a human, cultural and geographical sense, Kazakhstan today is the product of a peculiar synthesis of different
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ways to manage an economy, subordinating nomadic livestock farming, the agriculture of settled peoples and the industrial development of rich, raw material resources. Finally, it joins various cosmogonical and religious concepts (Shamanism, Islam and Christianity) with certain political and social constructions, including or excluding tradition and modernity. As a result, the internal organization of Kazakhstan is a full reflection of its original state, emerging out of the synthesis of the European model, transplanted from Russia, and its inner Turko-Muslim core, that has been preserved in the traditional sphere. All of this has created a polyethnic and multi-faith Kazakhstani society.

Kazakhstan today is considered to be the most successful economy among the countries of the CIS. The process of economic transformation in Kazakhstan is a graphic example of the difficulties that have to be overcome on the way to a market economy, even for newly-independent states with the richest of resources. The country’s leaders inherited a situation that gave real grounds for optimism. The economy was diversified in nature and a reasonably well-developed processing industry and agricultural sector presented potential for a smooth transition to independence, by satisfying the material requests of the population to an extent that would preserve political stability.

However, the republic’s economy has come a long way and this path is characterized by a dramatic fall in production and a high level of inflation at the beginning of the 1990s. But by the end of the 1990s, Kazakhstan had come through a phase of macroeconomic stabilization, the creation of a financial system and the privatization of major sectors of the economy. From then until the present, the economy of Kazakhstan has been in the ascendancy.

Economic reforms, implemented under the leadership of President Nursultan Nazarbaev, have led to serious sociopolitical changes. Kazakhstani business now has young entrepreneurs, who have graduated from famous institutes in Moscow or who hold degrees in economics, finance and the engineering sciences from the English-speaking world. In the early 1990s, many of them became the owners of small and medium-sized businesses or banks. They acquired the mentality of a liberal market economy and they were ready and able to run their business without state subsidies. These representatives of the younger generation received the best education, they established international contacts and they were not burdened with the ideological ballast of the Soviet period.