

Evolution of and Factors in the Making of Kazakhstan Foreign and Security Policy

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I. Introduction

Over the years of its independence, the Republic of Kazakhstan has made significant efforts to establish a robust system for securing the nation's well-being. Kazakhstan's security framework has been shaped by its historical and geopolitical backdrop. The nation's leadership has strived to craft a foreign policy that harmonizes the concerns of its neighboring states, effectively handles its abundant natural resources, and fosters partnerships on both regional and global actors. Kazakhstan's security doctrine encompasses components involving multi-vector foreign policy, economic progress, and defense capabilities. These elements form the core of Kazakhstan's security strategy.

The ongoing and protracted conflict between Russia and Ukraine, along with the complex situation in Afghanistan, serve as just a few examples of the myriad factors that exert substantial influence on Kazakhstan's national security landscape. These external dynamics have created a web of challenges and considerations for the Kazakh government and its policymakers. Apart from these, a range of other regional and global concerns, such as economic uncertainties and issues related to water and energy resources, all add to the intricate web of challenges that Kazakhstan needs to manage in order to protect its national security. In accordance with the President K.-J. Tokayev's observations, the escalation of geopolitical tensions, an unparalleled confrontation involving sanctions, and the proliferation of hybrid conflicts are generating entirely fresh complexities in the realm of national security. In his view, the rapid process of globalization and a sweeping technological revolution have resulted in an environment where national

borders are progressively losing their opacity and becoming more accessible. This heightened interconnectivity among states is expanding, and as a result, the external impact on Kazakhstan's information and sociocultural sphere is on the ascent.

The purpose of this article is to analyse factors and developments that have influenced the establishment and evolution of international dimension of Kazakhstan's national security system and it also seeks to examine President K. Tokayev's approach to national security issues.

II. Theoretical and methodological starting points

It is essential to have a clear understanding of Kazakhstan's sovereign status and how it is perceived on the global stage. It's evident that Kazakhstan cannot engage in power politics or exert significant influence on the international relations, especially at a geopolitical level. Unlike nations such as Russia or China, which can incorporate notions like a "geopolitical sphere of influence" into their foreign policy strategies and build complex networks within this realm. Kazakhstan can be categorized as a minor actor in global affairs. As a result, its foreign policy should adopt a pragmatic orientation, with a primary focus on addressing and contributing to domestic, economic, and security policy matters.

In this research, neoclassical realism serves as the principal theoretical framework for analyzing the evolution of Kazakhstan's external security policy priorities.

One fundamental aspect of neoclassical realism is its premise that foreign policy is shaped not only by the international relations structure but also by the internal attributes of the state. Consequently, states, because of these internal factors that modify the impact of the international relations structure, formulate

1. "Глава государства принял участие в торжественном собрании по случаю 30-летия Комитета национальной безопасности," года, 13 июля 2022, <https://www.akorda.kz/ru/glava-gosudarstva-prinyal-uchastie-v-torzhestvennom-sobranii-po-sluchayu-30-letiya-komiteta-nacionalnoy-bezopasnosti-1361350>.

their engagements with other actors in diverse ways.² According to neoclassical neorealism, elites' interpretation of the international relations structure significantly contributes to foreign policy formation. State leaders with their perspectives on global politics, play a decisive role in the decision-making process. Political elites can interpret certain challenges to a national security in varying ways, sometimes overemphasizing or downplaying the importance of certain threats. As a consequence of this notion, it can be deduced that states with similar capabilities may exhibit distinct behaviors in international relations. Furthermore, the element of how government leaders perceive the significance of a specific phenomenon can undergo alterations, ultimately influencing the progression of foreign policy. Government leaders play a direct role in the delineation of national interests. It can also be deduced that strategic objectives, including the way international relations are perceived, have the potential to shift and develop over time.

Finally, the ultimate pivotal variable impacting the alteration of the impact stemming from the structure of international relations is the political apparatus of the state, within which each governmental entity assumes an allocated function. This particular variable configures the foreign policy decision-making process and may impose constraints on the selection of foreign and security policy trajectories.

Thus, neoclassical realism enables us to examine an actor's foreign and security policy comprehensively, not excluding the importance of the international relations structure's influence.

III. Kazakhstan national security: Eurasian dimension

In the initial years of its independence, Kazakhstan's authorities devised a regional strategy predicated on the dual objectives of ensuring national security and protecting national interests, while concurrently seeking to assume a leading

2. Gideon Rose, "Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy," *World Politics*, Vol. 51, No. 1, October 1998, p. 146.

role within the Central Asian region. Recognizing that the country could not independently ensure its own national security in the near term, the leadership adopted a forward-looking multi-vector foreign policy approach as a solution. Nazarbayev found it increasingly difficult to separate his domestic and foreign policies.³ This perspective is enshrined within the "Strategy for the Establishment and Advancement of Kazakhstan as an Independent Nation" of 1992, which clearly delineated Kazakhstan's commitment to an exclusively defensive foreign policy doctrine and refraining from asserting territorial, economic, or political demands upon its neighboring nations. Particularly, the leadership of Kazakhstan delineated the central tenets for the preservation of national security, which encompassed:

- cultivating unique relations with Russia;
- aiming to establish a coalition of Central Asian states;
- promoting comprehensive collective security pact within the CIS.⁴

Upon relinquishing its nuclear arsenal, Kazakhstan garnered substantial assurances from nuclear-capable states regarding territorial integrity and the respect for its sovereignty. This strategic shift facilitated the attainment of strategic advantages in various domains of international cooperation. The leadership of Kazakhstan demonstrated an acute awareness of the potential ramifications of political, economic, and military shifts in neighboring countries on the security and stability of Kazakhstan. As a result, Kazakhstan proactively involved itself in a range of regional and international agreements pertaining to matters of security and politics. This proactive approach was rooted in the understanding that isolation from regional developments was neither feasible nor advisable. In this

3. Sally N. Cummings, "Eurasian Bridge or Murky Waters between East and West? Ideas, Identity and Output in Kazakhstan's Foreign Policy," *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, Vol. 19, No. 3, 2003, p. 155.

4. Лаумулин Мурат, "Казахстан: гражданский фактор в формировании политики национальной безопасности," Р. Домисевич, Ю. Назаркина под ред., *Домисевич Гражданский контроль национальной политики безопасности: Опыт стран СНГ* (Москва: DCAF, 2004), p. 175.

context, through participation in regional coalitions, small states like Kazakhstan could assume a prominent role in international relations, both regionally and on the global stage. And this was reasonable, as contemporary security challenges disproportionately affect small nations, rendering them structurally disadvantaged players, their membership in the new institutions enables them to have an impact on decision-making processes within the international relations system. Kazakhstan actively participated in establishing a legal framework for military-political cooperation within the CIS, including agreements such as the 1992 Collective Security Agreement and the 1993 Memorandum of Cooperation on Border Defense. Kazakhstan not only supported integration processes, but also fostered bilateral relations with neighboring states. Kazakhstan's regional policies are grounded in the belief that cooperation based on legal principles will help it retain a leading role and protect its interests at the regional level. Astana actively promoted this strategy by initiating the establishment of regional and sub-regional organizations like the Eurasian Economic Community, CSTO, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), and others. These organizations constitute a complex network of integrative initiatives connecting post-Soviet countries. In February 2005, President Nazarbayev introduced the idea of forming a Union of Central Asian States to ensure the stable development, security, and strengthening of stability in the region's states.

The geopolitical positioning of Kazakhstan requires the importance of collaborating on security matters, and as a result, it assigns significant emphasis to bilateral relations with key players, namely Russia and China, in its strategic documents.

(I)Russia

Essentially, Kazakhstan and Russia are partners and allies within integration frameworks like EAEU and CSTO. Kazakhstan's enduring interests in its

relationship with Russia are rooted in such fundamental and long-term factors like geography and history, Russia's substantial political, economic and cultural influence and considerable military-technical capabilities.

Sustaining a robust alliance with Russia is imperative for Kazakhstan due to its status as a landlocked nation and rendering access to global markets is of paramount importance for its economy. The border, extending for more than 7,500 kilometers, promotes cross-border connections not just between the two nations but also acts as a link between the European sector of the CIS and the Central Asian region. Personal interactions between Presidents N. Nazarbayev and V. Putin played a pivotal role in reinforcing the longstanding and strong partnership between the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation.

The adaptable approach of simultaneously pursuing a multi-vector foreign policy while nurturing unique ties with Russia seems to have yielded positive results. This flexible foreign policy approach has attracted various foreign economic partners, and the special relationship with Russia has firmly positioned Kazakhstan within a Russian security framework.

Between 1992 and 2000, more than 300 agreements were signed. These agreements covered a range of areas, including the parties' dedication to coordinating their foreign and defense policies and offering assistance to each other in the case of an aggression.⁵ These agreements also comprised commitments to prevent the use of their territories for activities that could threaten the security or stability of neighboring states. Additionally, they expressed a mutual aspiration for integration in economic and cultural realms, along with the alignment of their legal frameworks.

In the 2000s, the changing political landscape continued to foster the

5. Губайдуллина М.Ш., Конуспаев Е.Б., "Становление и развитие концепции внешней политики РК. Особенности принятия решений: РК – Россия – СНГ," *Вестник КазНУ. Серия международные отношения и международное право*, Vol. 96, No. 4, 2021, pp. 4-7.

advancement of Kazakhstan-Russian relations. A pivotal element contributing to this increased focus on Kazakhstan was the growing influence of various global and regional powers in the post-Soviet region, a region considered by Russia as falling within its sphere of “privileged interests.” Moreover, Kazakhstan actively contributed to the establishment of entities like the EurAsEC and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, which gained greater political significance as the CIS faced a decline and internal disagreements among its members became more apparent.

However, the dynamics of Kazakhstani- Russian cooperation encountered significant challenges after Crimean crisis. These challenges predominantly stemmed from apprehensions about the prospect of Russia employing a similar approach towards northern territories of Kazakhstan. They gained traction due to certain statements made by Russian political figures.⁶ These statements exacerbated an already complex landscape of Russian-Kazakh relations.

During this period, Russia extended the lease of the Baikonur complex until 2050. Concurrently, bilateral intergovernmental agreements from 2004 and 2005 laid the groundwork for the establishment of the Kazakh space rocket complex, Baiterek, at the Baikonur Cosmodrome. Furthermore, in 2013, the presidents of Russia and Kazakhstan signed the Agreement on Military-Technical Cooperation in Moscow. As part of this cooperation, Russia leased four military testing grounds located within Kazakhstan’s territory, and Kazakh military personnel received training in Russian military educational institutions.

Broadly speaking, the mutual desire of the Russian Federation and the Republic of Kazakhstan to advance their relations is primarily influenced by military-political and economic considerations. According to the current foreign

6. Almaz Kumenov, “Russian Nationalists Again Rile Kazakhstan by Questioning Its Nationhood,” *Eurasianet*, December 15, 2020, <https://eurasianet.org/russian-nationalists-again-rile-kazakhstan-by-questioning-its-nationhood>.

policy doctrine of the Russian Federation,⁷ the top priority is to ensure that cooperation with CIS states, both multilateral and bilateral, aligns with the state's national security objectives. This is particularly noteworthy for Kazakhstan, the only Central Asian state with a border shared with Russia, as it has consistently maintained its role as a reliable strategic partner.

(II) China

Several factors have played a crucial role in elevating the relationship between the Republic of Kazakhstan and the People's Republic of China to a strategic level. These factors include their geographical proximity, common border over 1,782 kilometers, Kazakhstan's natural resources, China's substantial trade, economic, and technological capabilities, Kazakh diaspora in China, Kazakhstan's location with significant transport and communication potential. Furthermore, the role of personal relationships between the leaders of Kazakhstan and China has played a significant part in improving mutual understanding and aligning the positions of the two countries on a wide range of regional and international issues. The personal connections among high-ranking officials have cultivated an atmosphere of trust, especially in security area. China stands as one of the nations entrusted with ensuring the nuclear safety of Kazakhstan.

In the early 1990s, China's foremost objective was to achieve demilitarization along its borders, finalize demarcation agreements, and containing Uighur separatism. Kazakhstan and other Central Asian states have demonstrated their willingness to collaborate in security sector by signing bilateral declarations related to combating separatism.

7. "Концепция внешней политики Российской Федерации (утверждена Президентом Российской Федерации В.В.Путиным 31 марта 2023 г.)," *Министерство иностранных дел Российской Федерации*, March 31, 2023, <https://www.mid.ru/ru/detail-material-page/1860586/>.

Collaboration with China stands as the central pillar of Kazakhstan's foreign policy, primarily aimed at securing its independence, national security, and preserving regional stability. Addressing issues related to ethnic separatism and religious extremism plays a significant role in their bilateral relationship. Agreements between the Republic of Kazakhstan and the People's Republic of China on combating separatism are codified in their bilateral agreements. Notably, within the framework of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in June 2001, they adopted the Convention on Combating Terrorism, Separatism, and Extremism, which includes provisions for establishing a joint anti-terrorist center.

Kazakhstan and China gradually progressed toward the formulation of their most significant strategic agreements. In July 2005, they formalized a "long-term strategic partnership" through a joint Declaration. In 2006, they established the "Strategy of Cooperation in the 21st Century," which was complemented by the "Concept for the Development of Economic Cooperation." This framework, as emphasized by Hu Jintao, further solidified the pragmatic aspect of their relationship. In 2011, the Joint Declaration of the Heads of State of Kazakhstan and the People's Republic of China established a trajectory towards a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership. Finally, in 2015, they officially declared their relationship as a "Comprehensive Strategic Partnership."

Kazakhstan's involvement in the Belt and Road Initiative offers promising opportunities, including the potential to fully utilize its transit capabilities and modernize its transportation and logistical infrastructure. Various potential transportation routes passing through the region would make use of Kazakhstan as a central transit and logistical hub, leading to significant economic benefits. This involvement would enhance the nation's transit potential, boost trade volume, enhance transportation and logistics infrastructure, and attract increased investment. The enhanced partnership between both countries through the Belt and Road Initiative has exacerbated existing disparities in power dynamics and instilled a

reluctance to address delicate issues as cross-border water problems.⁸

(III) Central Asia

The Central Asian dimension of Kazakhstan's foreign policy is still a prominent part of its agenda, but it has yet to fully realize its potential. Central Asian states face challenges in terms of economic and military self-sufficiency, making them susceptible to external security threats due to their military vulnerabilities. Consequently, external powers often play a role as security guarantors. Moreover, the diverse external priorities of Central Asian countries present a substantial challenge. A key objective is to identify and implement effective forms of cooperation among these states that align their national interests with the requirements of regional integration.

These nations are situated in a region marked by various security challenges, with border disputes taking on particular significance. The precarious regional environment, where any shift in the power dynamics can escalate into a significant conflict, combined with their constrained military capabilities, compels these states to seek any form of regional cooperation. Kazakhstan views a collective approach by regional states as the only viable solution to the challenges they confront. Consequently, Kazakhstan supports collaboration with various organizations that address the multiple security threats in the region.

Bilateral relations with Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan, to varying degrees, align with this regional strategy, although Kazakhstan encountered certain inconsistencies in its relationship with Uzbekistan during the Karimov's period. The perceived competition for regional leadership between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan can be attributed to their comparable strategic capabilities, economic potential, and their roles on the international stage.

8. Brassetta J., Akmadi M., Sternber T., "Seeing beyond Negotiations: the Impacts of the Belt and Road on Sino-Kazakh Transboundary Water Management," *International Journal of Water Resources Development*, Vol. 39, No. 3, 2023, pp. 361-381 <https://doi.org/10.1080/07900627.2022.2090905>

Since the early 1990s, water-related issues have emerged as significant factors in regional security. The existing mechanism for managing transboundary water resources in Central Asia is fraught with considerable conflict potential, with water problems ranking high in the hierarchy of regional challenges. Consequently, water-related issues in Central Asia carry substantial potential for conflict and necessitate continuous monitoring. Despite numerous discussions and efforts to resolve these problems, the involved parties have not yet reached a consensus. Additionally, the involvement of external nations and international organizations in addressing the water issue has yielded limited success.

The 1992 Agreement on the Sharing of Water Resources and the 1998 Framework Agreement on the Use of Water and Energy Resources in the Syr Darya Basin are characterized by a limited level of legal sophistication and lack effective monitoring mechanisms. Consequently, the primary means of water and energy exchange today involve bilateral and trilateral annual agreements established under the Water Coordination Commission's auspices. Although these agreements have become a regular and well-organized practice, they do not rest on a framework of general obligations. Instead, they imply a constant need for aligning interests, demanding substantial diplomatic efforts from the "lower" states, including Kazakhstan. The consensus achieved through these agreements appears to be precarious.

Presently, the region is experiencing improved relations and the formulation of a collaborative agenda for Central Asia's development following the assumption of office by the new President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, which could also impact the dynamics surrounding water and energy resources.

The period from 2020 to 2021 witnessed an intensification of developments around the Central Asian region and within it. Notably, the situation in Afghanistan, including the ascent of the Taliban movement, emerged as a primary security concern for Kazakhstan and the wider region. Kazakhstan places significant

emphasis on addressing issues such as international terrorism, extremism, the illicit trade of drugs and weapons, and illegal migration, as President Tokayev underscored during the CSTO anniversary summit in 2022.⁹

IV. Tokayev's new Kazakhstan

The start of 2022 witnessed the gas revolt in Western Kazakhstan, which were followed by turmoil also known as “Tragic January.” The deployment of the CSTO peacekeeping forces not only drew substantial criticism from Western partners and sparked protests but also underscored the necessity for social, political, and economic reforms within the country. This policy was subsequently labeled as “New Kazakhstan.”

In the aftermath of suppressing the rebellion, Kazakhstan's leadership endeavored to advance the course established during the transition of power by pursuing systematic changes that encompassed extensive economic and socio-political reforms. These reforms were implemented with the aim of forging a new model of public governance and establishing mechanisms to foster dialogue between the government and society, all within the framework of the “Hearing State” concept.

Subsequently, through a republican referendum held on June 5, 2022, constitutional modifications were enacted, resulting in the limitation of the president's authority, a reduction of the presidential term to seven years, and an alteration in the regulations governing parliamentary elections. This marked the initiation of a process aimed at reevaluating Nursultan Nazarbayev's legacy. Notably, he was relieved of all governmental roles, and references to him as the first president were expunged from the Constitution.

9. “Выступление Главы государства Касым-Жомарта Токаева на внеочередной сессии Совета коллективной безопасности,” *ОДКБ*, <https://akorda.kz/ru/vystuplenie-glavy-gosudarstva-kasym-zhomarta-kemelevicha-na-vneocherednoy-sessii-soveta-kollektivnoy-bezopasnosti-odkb-1002245>.

Additionally, a law adopted on June 29, 2023, during a Senate plenary session, revoked Nazarbayev's position as the head of the Supreme Council for the educational institutions, university, and foundation named after him.

Re-election of Tokayev in 2022 afforded him the mandate to initiate a series of reform initiatives designed to chart a sustained course for the country's socio-political and economic development. The impetus behind the transformation of Kazakhstan's political system in the aftermath of the January uprising was grounded in the aspiration to establish a novel political ethos, thereby facilitating the emergence of avenues for progressive innovations, especially in the sphere of foreign policy. Within this complex framework, the positioning of Russia was significantly shaped by the rapid shifts and complexities inherent to the evolving geopolitical landscape.

President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev endorsed the Republic of Kazakhstan's new Foreign Policy Concept for the years 2020 to 2030. This document outlines the nation's foreign policy objectives for the coming decade. Notably, the concept assigns a significant and unique status to the country's relationship with the Russian Federation. A noteworthy aspect of this new foreign policy concept is that it explicitly underscores the importance of advancing "allied relations with the Russian Federation."¹⁰

In the expert community, there is a near-consensus that the CSTO's presence, albeit a temporary one, signifies the end of Kazakhstan's multi-vector foreign policy approach. The main argument revolves around a demonstration of authoritarian unity led by President Putin.¹¹ The CSTO's operation in Kazakhstan

10. "О Концепции внешней политики Республики Казахстан на 2020 – 2030," *Official website of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan*, 9 марта 2020, https://www.akorda.kz/ru/legal_acts/decrees/o-koncepcii-vneshnei-politiki-respubliki-kazahstan-na-2020-2030-gody.

11. Kukeyeva F., "Eurasian Partners for Kazakhstan During Power Transition," in Baizakova K., Yann Alix, & Chabal P. ed., *The Completion of Eurasia? Continental convergence or regional dissent in the context of 'historic turns'* (Peter Lang, 2023), p. 101.

in January 2022 carried geopolitical significance for Russia. Moscow's primary motive was to ensure stability in Kazakhstan, given the extensive Russian-Kazakh border, which is inadequately equipped and, in some areas, not even demarcated.

Kazakhstan aligns with Russia in the security domain, while concurrently adopting a balanced approach in political matters, upholding its neutral stance. This foreign policy approach aligns with the concept of "hedging," a comprehensive strategy that employs a combination of both balancing and bandwagoning strategies to secure its interests and optimize advantages.¹² The primary pillar of Kazakhstan's security hinges on having a non-aggressive Russia, and it's crucial, above all, to maintain a positive relationship between Kazakhstan and Russia. This may explain why Tokayev is hesitant to label any country as a potential threat, even if it means downplaying the fact that the more assertive Russia could indeed pose a real and potential threat to Kazakhstan.

When Georgia and Ukraine attempted to align themselves with the United States and Western nations, the Kremlin responded with a strong and forceful approach. The 2008 invasion of Georgia and military operation in Ukraine exemplify how Russia responds to what it views as threats to its fundamental interests. As a result, Kazakhstan is facing a dilemma where Russia's efforts to establish an exclusive sphere of influence are progressively becoming a concrete and undeniable reality. Tokayev even has opted to halt the progression towards adopting the Latin alphabet and maintain the current script, primarily in response to the growing concern raised by Russia regarding the language issue. During the summit in Astana in October 2022, Kassym-Jomart Tokayev engaged in discussions with Russian President Vladimir Putin about the notion of advancing

12. Kuik, Cheng-Chwee, "The Essence of Hedging: Malaysia and Singapore's Response to a Rising China," *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Vol. 30, No. 2, August 2008, pp. 159-185; Roman a. Yuneman, "Kazakhstan's Multi-Vector Foreign Policy A Case Study of Voting on UNGA Resolutions," *Russia in Global Affairs*, April/June 2023, <https://eng.globalaffairs.ru/articles/kazakhstan-multi-vector/>.

the Russian language within the CIS and suggested the establishment of an international organization to encourage and bolster the use of the Russian language in post-Soviet nations.¹³

Kazakhstan's evolving geopolitical situation is increasingly influenced by Russian foreign policy, particularly in the context of Russia's military operation in Ukraine. The ongoing conflict in Ukraine introduces additional risks, particularly concerning secondary channels of foreign trade and foreign direct investment. The escalating geopolitical complexities and subsequent global economic uncertainty pose threats to reduced investment activity, the deterioration of foreign trade relationships, and business interactions, exacerbating factors that contribute to a weakening economic environment. Given Kazakhstan's status as an open economy deeply engaged in international trade and the production of goods with prices influenced by global markets, these risks have a significant impact.

Key geopolitical challenges for the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) since 2014 have included the Western sanctions imposed on Russia, which have affected the economies of all EAEU member countries. This impact includes a decrease in foreign investment inflows, potential increases in protectionist measures, and difficulties in accessing advanced technologies. Moreover, the trade tensions between China and the United States have had adverse consequences for the development of EAEU countries, given China's substantial role as an investor and trading partner with member states of the Union.

An indicator of the shared risks faced by EAEU member countries was the depreciation of the Russian ruble, which had a direct effect on the value of the Kazakhstani tenge.

13. "Kazakhstan's President Proposes International Russian Language Organization at CIS Summit," *Daryo*, October 13, 2023, <https://daryo.uz/en/2023/10/13/kazakhstans-president-proposes-international-russian-language-organization-at-cis-summit>.

Another significant risk pertains to Russia's intention to transition economic relationships into more politically oriented ones within the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU). This was evident in 2020 during a routine meeting of the Supreme Eurasian Economic Council when President Tokayev made several statements concerning a strategy for the advancement of Eurasian integration. This strategy raised concerns, as it was perceived as potentially limiting the sovereign rights of governments and parliament, a move that could face resistance and rejection from the perspective of national public opinion.

Kazakhstan's participation in the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) carries certain risks, notably, the imposition of collective sanctions by Western countries against Russia. The policy of sanctions, which has evolved into a global phenomenon, not only impacts the immediate condition of the global economy and its future trends but also presents potential hazards for countries partnering with Russia. The entities imposing sanctions directly communicate to businesses in third countries that engagement with Russia-sanctioned enterprises is discouraged and may result in "secondary restrictions" being imposed upon them.

President Tokayev has unequivocally stated Kazakhstan's political neutrality, particularly in his declaration of non-recognition of any quasi-states, which includes the Luhansk People's Republic (LPR) and Donetsk People's Republic (DPR).¹⁴ This underscores Kazakhstan's commitment to remaining impartial and not officially recognizing entities that are often considered self-declared or breakaway regions. Kazakhstan's membership in CSTO and its relationship with Russia play a crucial role in shaping the country's defense strategy, regional security efforts, and overall military posture and these issues were reflected in military doctrines adopted between 2007 and 2022. Even though Tokayev hasn't openly labeled

14. Vusala Abbasova, "President Tokayev Says Kazakhstan Will Not Recognize Donetsk, Lugansk as Independent States," *Caspian News*, June 20, 2022, <https://caspiannews.com/news-detail/president-tokayev-says-kazakhstan-will-not-recognize-donetsk-lugansk-as-independent-states-2022-6-20-0/>.

Russia as a threat, he is inclined to contemplate additional measures to enhance his country's autonomy through its relations with China.

Kazakhstan appears to have aligned itself economically with China. The Chinese direction, which is a priority but also contentious, has been consistently maintained as a stable level of strategic partnership. On September 14, 2022, President Xi Jinping embarked on a notable visit to Kazakhstan, which held significance as his first overseas trip following an extended hiatus attributed to the pandemic. This choice of destination was influenced by several key factors. Primarily, the visit aimed to facilitate an in-depth exchange of information with President Tokayev, particularly concerning the events that transpired in January.

In September 2022, during his official trip to Kazakhstan, the Chinese leader conveyed a noteworthy message, emphasizing China's unwavering commitment to supporting Kazakhstan in safeguarding its independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity, while strongly opposing any external interference in the nation's internal affairs. It is apparent that this message was intended for Russia. As a result, the potential divergence of interests between China and Russia highlights the increased adaptability of Kazakhstan's multivector foreign policy in the face of evolving global dynamics.

The Chinese leadership continues to emphasize the economic focus of Kazakhstan's agenda. Consequently, one of the central topics in the cooperation between the two nations is the execution of objectives within the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), as well as the Trans-Caspian international transport route. The significance of the latter has multiplied, particularly in light of the decreased Chinese transit to Europe via Russia.

An examination of the dynamics in the relationship between the Republic of Kazakhstan and the People's Republic of China reveals a discernible inclination towards the expansion of Chinese interests in Central Asia and Kazakhstan. This trend is exemplified by the elevation of the "Central Asia + China" framework

to the level of heads of state, the advancement of various Chinese initiatives and projects, as well as the bolstering of soft power efforts in Central Asian nations, among other factors. The Xi'an Declaration of the China-Central Asia Summit, ratified on May 19, 2023, solidified Kazakhstan's pivotal role (and that of Central Asia in its entirety) within the One Belt - One Road initiative.

Kazakhstan acknowledges the importance of collaboration on security matters, and as a result, places significant emphasis on bilateral partnerships and participation in multilateral frameworks within its strategic documents. Tokayev is actively advocating for the perception of Kazakhstan as a nation that plays a valuable role in the global community, with a specific emphasis on collective security and cooperation with neighboring states regarding specific security matters. During the 78th session of the UN General Assembly, Tokayev reaffirmed Kazakhstan's dedication to enhancing its diverse collaborations with Central Asian nations. He emphasized the potential for Central Asia to assume a more active and unified role within the global community, thus supporting worldwide development efforts. He stressed that the regional priorities should encompass Afghanistan, with the goal of transforming it into a stable, prosperous nation.

In the foreseeable future, we can expect the persistence of the trend that reinforces the cooperative ties between Kazakhstan and Turkey. Ankara is evolving into an influential regional player and an integral component within Kazakhstan's multifaceted external relations, primarily in light of Turkey's expanding military and geopolitical relevance. The connecting factors include shared historical, cultural, and linguistic ties. A mutual public interest in enhancing formal collaboration exists in both nations. Over an extended period, Turkish territory may conceivably play a pivotal role as a primary channel for facilitating the export of Kazakh goods to global markets.

V. Conclusion

The current global shifts are leading to alterations in the positions and functions of small states within the realm of world politics and international relations. These transformations are evident in the creation of fresh avenues for small states to attain their foreign policy objectives and carry out development strategies. Concurrently, the global transformations are reshaping the conception of state security. As a small state, Kazakhstan formulates its foreign policy towards regional powers and neighboring nations with consideration of its restricted geopolitical, economic, and other capacities. These limitations necessitate the adoption of distinctive behavioral approaches, distinct from those employed by larger, multi-regional states, to effectively pursue and safeguard its national interests. Due to the evolving political landscape in Central Asia, the increasing influence of China, the multi-vector policy undergone substantial transformations. Kazakhstan's foreign and security strategy encompasses the adoption of various approaches, including the balancing, bandwagoning, collective security strategy, and neutrality.

In pursuit of its security objectives, Kazakhstan endeavors to leverage all available state assets and international resources without resorting to military force. This approach encompasses harnessing the full spectrum of the nation's political, economic, scientific, technological, spiritual, cultural, informational, and humanitarian resources to facilitate its integration into the global community. This, in turn, fosters the development of robust relationships that enhance mutual trust and mitigate military confrontations that hinder the pursuit of power politics.

Driven by the conviction that the realization of national interests and security primarily relies on integration and the establishment of regional balance, Kazakhstan actively promoting regional partnerships. President K.-J. Tokayev is a forward-thinking leader with the ability to anticipate the advantages and feasibility of attaining objectives within the context of a versatile, yet practical, policy

framework.

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Evolution of and Factors in the Making of Kazakhstan Foreign and Security Policy

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Abstract

Kazakhstan is not a global power. Being geopolitically located in Eurasia, it has to remain flexible in interacting with major powers and neighboring countries. The main strategy is to maintain the power balance in Central Asia by band wagoning with powerful countries or remaining neutral. Kazakhstan is pragmatic in diplomacy and national security, an attitude that is not only affected by the international structure, but also needs to take into account domestic development.

The article briefly reviews the development of the country's foreign policy since independence. Kazakhstan's sudden strained relationship with Russia mainly comes from Russia's annexation of eastern Ukraine, which has brought tension to the areas inhabited by Russian descendants in northern Kazakhstan. However, Russia has four military experimental sites and military bases in Kazakhstan, and most Kazakh military officers receive training in Russian military academies, making it impossible for the two countries to conduct military separation. As for relations with China, in the past they emphasized demilitarization of borders and preventing Xinjiang Uyghurs from using external forces to break away. Now, because of the Belt and Road Initiative, Kazakhstan has received huge Chinese investment, but this has made the relationship between the two countries very unequal. Kazakhstan's relations with other Central Asian countries are mainly troubled by water cooperation and border security issues. Now, due to Uzbekistan's change in attitude towards its neighbors, regional collective security cooperation is gradually becoming possible. The most likely threat at present is Islamism spreading from Afghanistan.

Kazakhstan's current foreign policy still aligns itself with Russia militarily, but maintains a neutral stance in international politics. The war in Ukraine brought economic sanctions against Russia, affecting the functioning of the Eurasian Economic Union. Moreover, the trade and geopolitical conflicts between China and the United States have also put Kazakhstan in an awkward situation. Kazakhstan is careful not to interfere in the internal affairs of the Russians, while at the same time strengthening its own national identity, such as changing the Kazakh written script. Now Kazakhstan is swinging between or relies on China and Russia. In return, for example, Xi Jinping's brief visit to Kazakhstan in 2022 symbolically showed China's support for Kazakhstan's territorial integrity.

Keywords: Kazakhstani Diplomacy, Central Asia Regional Security, Power Politics