

Kazakhstani Foreign Policy and Strategic Partnership with Russian Federation

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ABSTRACT

This thesis argues that although Kazakhstan gained its Independence in 1991, its foreign policy orientation is persistently in harmony with Russian strategic interests in the region. Even the most popular nationalistic project which is known as the policy of “Kazakhization” didn’t lead to any conflict between the two states. It seems this harmony manifests a great dependency of Kazakhstan on Russia.

This dependency, however, doesn’t mean that the relations between Kazakhstan and Russian Federation protect only Russian interests. Through being supportive of Russian strategic interests in the region, the Kazakh ruling elite secured its dominant positions in society. Russian-Kazakh relations constitute a strategic partnership. The purpose of this study is to examine the dynamics of the current political cooperation between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Kazakhstan on the basis of the following hypotheses:

- Kazakhstan’s foreign policy orientations and its international identity have led to high degree of consistency with and dependency on the Russian strategic interests in the Central Asia.
- As the most important nationalistic project ‘Kazakhization’ policy of Kazakhstan has been designed in such a way that it maintains a strategic partnership between Russia and Kazakhstan.

The thesis argued that Russian strategic interests in the post-communist territories are associated with the superpower status of Russia. Without protecting such strategic interests Russia cannot maintain its superpower position in the international system.

Keywords: Kazakhstan, Russia, Kazakhization, Dependency, Strategic partnership

ÖZ

Bu tez; Kazakistan'ın 1991 yılında bağımsızlığını ilan etmesine rağmen, ülkenin dış politika yöneliminin Rusya'nın bölgedeki stratejik çıkarlarıyla sürekli bir uyum içerisinde olduğunu savunmaktadır. ‘‘Kazaklaştırma’’ politikası olarak bilinen ülkenin en popüler milliyetçi hareketi bile Kazakistan ile Rusya arasında hiçbir sorun teşkil etmemiştir. Bu uyum Kazakistan'ın Rusya'ya olan bağımlılığını ortaya çıkarmaktadır.

Her şeye rağmen bu bağımlılık; Kazakistan ile Rusya Federasyonu arasındaki ilişkilerin sadece ve sadece Rusya'nın çıkarlarını gözetmek üzere kurulu olduğu anlamına gelmemektedir. Kazakistan'ı yöneten elit kesim, her ne kadar Rusya'nın bölgedeki stratejik çıkarlarını desteklese de, toplumdaki hakim durumlarını da güvence altına almayı bilmiştir. Rus ve Kazak ilişkileri, stratejik bir ortaklık teşkil etmektedir. Bu çalışmanın amacı; aşağıdaki hipotezlerin esasına dayanarak, Rusya Federasyonu ile Kazakistan Cumhuriyeti arasındaki mevcut siyasi işbirliğinin dinamiklerinin incelenmesidir.

Hipotezler:

- Kazakistan'ın dış politika yönelimi ve uluslararası kimliği; Rusya'nın Orta Asya'daki çıkarları doğrultusunda tutarlılık ve bağımlılık göstermesine yol açmıştır.

- Kazakistan'ın en önemli milliyetçi hareketi olan ‘‘Kazaklaştırma’’ politikası bile Rusya ile Kazakistan arasındaki stratejik ortaklığı koruyacak şekilde tasarlanmıştır.

Bu tez; Rusya'nın, komünizm sonrası bölgelerdeki stratejik menfaatlerinin, süper güç olma çabası ile ilgili olduğunu savunmaktadır. Rusya, bu gibi stratejik çıkarları koruyamadan, uluslararası sistemdeki süper güç konumunu muhafaza edemez.

Anahtar kelimeler: Kazakistan, Rusya, Kazaklaştırma, Bağımlılık, Stratejik ortaklık

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Chapter 1

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

1.1 Introduction

The End of the Cold War turned the world to unipolar scheme. The collapse of the USSR resulted in the emergence of fifteen independent states. Largely reduced its territory, Russia lost its direct control in the region but has since then developed a new geostrategic perspective to maintain its influence on post-Soviet states as a successor of the Soviet Union. This geostrategic perspective was first initiated by the-then President of the Russian Federation Yeltsin's decree of September 14, 1995 which proclaimed and espoused that the reintegration of the post-Soviet states as a major security and foreign policy priority of Russia. The basic reason behind this security and foreign policy orientation of the then ruling elite was to compensate for the loss of previous influence in the region which had happened in the 1990s¹ when the newly independent Russian Federation primarily focused on the “short-term and

¹ Kazantsev, A. (2008) Russian policy in Central Asia and the Caspian Sea region. *Europe-Asia Studies*. Vol.60, Issue 6. (p. 1073)

middle-term domestic development priorities”² rather than on the development of bilateral cooperation with former Soviet republics.

Under the leadership of Vladimir Putin Russia started to play an active role in Central Asia aiming at reviving its political, economic and military power. Russian geostrategic perspectives have evolved towards reclaiming the superpower position of the USSR through “promoting a form of soft and nuanced hegemony over as many states as possible in the southern tier of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS)”³. For instance today as a result of this policy Russia has cooperated with a number of post-Soviet republics in the framework of the Commonwealth of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) which started to function at the very beginning of 2015. This organization was created in order to provide a common ground for the further merger of the economic spaces of the member states.⁴ In order to address a number of threats coming from the South the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) was set up with a joint command, rapid reaction forces, a common military command, and coordinated action in foreign, security and defense policy.⁵

As one of the post-Soviet states in the Southern tier of the CIS Kazakhstan plays a considerably important role in regional politics for a number of reasons. Firstly, it has a leading position in Central Asia, due to its huge reserves of hydrocarbon

² Zabortseva, Y. (2014) Rethinking the economic Relationship between Kazakhstan and Russia. *Europe-Asia Studies*. Vol. 66, No. 2 (p. 316)

³ Allison, Roy. (2004) Strategic reassertion in Russia's Central Asia policy. *International Affairs* 80, 2 (pp. 278-293)

⁴ Laumulin, M. (2009) Strategicheskie interesy Rossii v stranakh Tsentralnoi Azii na sovremennom etape [Contemporary strategic interests of Russia in Central Asia]. *Tsentralnaya Aziya I Kavkaz [Central Asia and Caucasus]* №3(63) (p.107-111)

⁵ Allison, Roy. (2004) Strategic reassertion in Russia's Central Asia policy. *International Affairs* 80, 2 (pp. 286)

resources. It has been found out that proven oil reserves at the end of 2014 stand at 30.0 billion barrels.⁶ In the future Kazakhstan has the potential to become a major second-tier supplier to the world markets. Secondly, its territory which is the ninth biggest in the world, provides a corridor of communication and transmission between Europe and Eastern or Southern Asia. As expressed by the Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev Kazakhstan is like a huge ‘snow leopard’ implying the aforementioned role of the country, “a space that links Europe to the Asia-Pacific”.⁷ Thirdly, Kazakhstan has a unique geostrategic position in the sense that it is the only state in the Central Asian region with a common boundary with Russian Federation, which is also happens to be the longest border between the two countries in the world. These characteristics make Kazakhstan a peculiar geostrategic bridge between the East and West.

Although the Kazakh political elite attribute an independent role to Kazakhstan in regional affairs this thesis argues that after the independence in 1991, its foreign policy orientations have persistently been in harmony with Russian strategic interests in the region. Russia remains the most important strategic partner of Kazakhstan, which is stated in the Foreign Policy Concept (FPC) of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2014-2020:

The Republic of Kazakhstan will continue to strengthen relations with Russia in all spheres of political, economic, trade and cultural cooperation on the basis of The Treaty on Good-Neighborliness and Alliance in the XXI century.⁸

The basic principles of the strategic partnership of the Russian Federation and the Republic of Kazakhstan are stated in a variety of bilateral agreements such as the

⁶ BP Statistical Review of World Energy. 64th edition (2015) (Available on bp.com/statisticalreview)

⁷ N. Nazarbayev. (1996). “Na poroge XXI veka” [on the threshold of the XXI century]. *Oner: Almaty*.

⁸ Foreign Policy Concept of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2014-2020 (available at <http://www.mfa.kz/index.php/en/foreign-policy/foreign-policy-concept-for-2014-2020-republic-of-kazakhstan> accessed 2.04.2016)

Treaty on Good-Neighborliness and Alliance in the XXI Century and the Agreement on Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance. In these documents main principles of cooperation are stated in such spheres as politics, economy and trade, energy, investment etc. For instance, under this Treaty Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation shall closely cooperate in strengthening peace, providing security and stability in the region and throughout the world. The cooperation is expected to be based on mutual trust and equality between states with respect to their territorial integrity and non-violation of the existing borders.⁹

As both states emerged from the Soviet Union, they share a common political history with intertwined traditions and culture as a natural result of about 70 years of living in unity. Many different nationalities claimed Soviet Union as their homeland being incorporated in a framework of a single state. In order to facilitate the “merging of nation”, the Soviet ruling elite took a number of actions that were aimed at undermining nationalistic feelings of member states in favor of the creation of a single nation – soviet people. Russian migration to the non-Russian regions was very extensive at that time, which served as an instrument for the promotion of Russian culture. Religious organizations were repressed because religion could have been a source of national identity. Regional economies were made dependent on the Soviet center and the process of indoctrination of schools and variety youth groups was operating on high level in order to facilitate the process of national integration.¹⁰ All of these factors largely affected constituent entities of the Soviet Union and even today the consequences of this policy are still seen.

⁹ Dogovor mezhdru Respublikoi Kazakhstan i Rossiiskoi Federatsyiei o dobrososedstve i soyuznichestve v XXI veke [Treaty on Good-Neighborliness and Alliance in the XXI Century] (available on <http://pravo.gov.ru:8080/Document/View/0001201412230026>)

¹⁰ Bremmer, I. (1997) Post-Soviet nationalities theory: past, present and future. *New States, New Politics: Building the Post-Soviet Nations*. (p. 9)

Although independent Kazakhstan right after the dissolution of the USSR started to revive its national values, Kazakh leaders also often emphasize the multicultural character of the Kazakh state and hence they have expressed their willingness to avoid any discrimination among citizens which is clearly stated in Article 14 of the Kazakh Constitution:

No one shall be subjected to any discrimination for reasons of origin, social and property status, occupation, sex, race, nationality, language, attitude towards religion, convictions, place of residence or any other circumstances.¹¹

Russian cultural influence still remains strong and its language is an important tool of Moscow's soft power in the region. Today Kazakhstan is a state in which Russian people constitute almost 23% of the population. This number is the highest among Central Asian countries, though considerably less than ten years ago.¹² More importantly, many Kazakh people don't speak their native language but rather they speak Russian.¹³ Russian is still the language of teaching in many schools. For instance, according to the educational statistics for 2014-2015 year 1291 schools teach in Russian language which makes 17.8% of the total number of Kazakhstani schools; 2100 schools which is 29% of total number are mixed and teach in more than one language.¹⁴ Apart from language, Russian presence is also felt during cultural events, notably along with the Kazakh national holidays Russian ones

¹¹ The Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Section II: The Individual and Citizen. Article 14

¹² Nixey, J. *The Long Goodbye: Waning Russian Influence in the South Caucasus and Central Asia. Chatham House Briefing Papers.* (p.14)

¹³ Russian Language Still Important, While Kazakh Need to Be Learned, President Says. *The Astana Times* (available at <http://astanatimes.com/2013/10/russian-language-still-important-while-kazakh-need-to-be-learned-president-says/> 11.04/2016)

¹⁴ Secondary education in Kazakhstan. Condition and perspectives. Analytical collection (2015) *Ministry of education of the Republic of Kazakhstan.* (available at http://stat.gov.kz/faces/wcnav_externalId/homeNumbersEducation;jsessionid=pkggX19HhvQF1JvSZhRJjpDfyc5BLvQxsKLnLGSH2WgnGLdJQRty!-144659013!420801149?lang=ru&_afLoop=35635046145997524#%40%3F_afLoop%3D35635046145997524%26lang%3Dru%26_adf.ctrl-state%3Ddhbv2cb2g_4 accessed 20.05.2016) (p.22)

including Orthodox Christmas and the Maslenitsa (Shrovtide) are also widely celebrated. All these factors strengthen Russian cultural presence in Kazakhstan.

Moreover, Kazakhstani President's personality plays a very important role in the relations between two states. He is the person who is often called an engine of the economic integration of the post-Soviet States, as he kept proposing this idea since his speech in 1994 at the Moscow State University. Nazarbayev clearly expressed his opposition to the collapse of the Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics. Rather he had "a certain official nostalgia for the time when Kazakhstan had both the freedom of sovereignty and the security of being part of a larger whole, a condition to which President Nazarbayev, at least, would like very much to have his country return to".¹⁵ Thus perhaps because of his nostalgia for the Soviet Union the most popular nationalistic project of Kazakhstan which is known as the policy of "Kazakhization", which manifested itself through the language policy, didn't lead to any conflict between the two states.

Kazakhstan is a particular case among other former Soviet republics. It is the only Post-Soviet republic in which the titular nationality constituted minority population of 39.5% according to the last Soviet Census.¹⁶ Titular nationality is a nation which for a number of demographic, cultural or political reasons "has been vested with administrative power in a given region".¹⁷ Hence for Kazakhstan titular nation are Kazakhs.

¹⁵ Brill Olcott, M. (1997) Kazakhstan: Pushing for Eurasia. *New States, New Politics: Building the Post-Soviet Nations*. (p. 547)

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Bremmer, I. (1997) Post-Soviet nationalities theory: past, present and future. *New States, New Politics: Building the Post-Soviet Nations*. (p. 13)

Kazakhstan is a home of more than 130 nationalities. Russian minority is slightly more than 20% today. During the Soviet period Kazakhstan was a host country receiving many immigrants, mostly Russians from all over the Soviet Union. Kazakhs didn't even constitute majority of the population when the Republic gained its independence, and people were extensively Russified, in other words Russian speakers constituted an absolute majority of the state's population.¹⁸ When Kazakhstan gained its independence, the situation totally changed. The government aimed at strengthening the official status of the titular nation by starting nationalistic project, namely the policy of Kazakhization. Language was one of the strongest instruments for the successful implementation of this policy. But Kazakhstan couldn't afford itself any discrimination with its 130 ethnic groups who still remained citizens of the republic. In order to maintain political stability in the country Kazakh ruling elite had to balance the relationships with its strong neighbor, but at the same time they promoted their own policy and strengthened titular nation. The Kazakh language retrieved supreme power, but at the same time the Russian language still performs important social functions, and is largely used even by the officials and has a status of the official language and language of international communication. It seems this harmony manifests a great dependency of Kazakhstan on Russia.

1.2 Hypotheses and Research Methodology

Since independence Kazakhstan coherently follows so-called "multi-vector" foreign policy. Its aim is to become maximally independent from Moscow, while maintaining Russia as a main partner economically and politically. One of the distinct examples when the Kazakh "multi-vector" policy manifested itself happened

¹⁸ Brill Olcott, M. (1997) Kazakhstan: Pushing for Eurasia. *New States, New Politics: Building the Post-Soviet Nations*. (pp. 547- 548)

when Kazakhstan preferred to work over the relinquishment of its nuclear arsenal with the United States rather than with Russian Federation.¹⁹ But still Russian Federation remains partner number one according to the Foreign policy Concept of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2014-2020.²⁰

This dependency of Kazakhstan on Russia, however, doesn't mean that the relations between Kazakhstan and Russian Federation protect only Russian interests. Through being supportive of Russian strategic interests in the region, the Kazakh ruling elite secured their dominant positions in society. Indeed Russian-Kazakh relations evolved towards creating mutual interdependence through a strategic partnership. The purpose of this thesis is to examine the dynamics of the current political cooperation between the Russia and the Republic of Kazakhstan on the basis of the following hypotheses:

1. Kazakhstani foreign policy orientations and its international identity have led to high degree of consistency with and dependency on the Russian strategic interests in the Central Asia.
2. As the most important nationalistic project 'Kazakhization' policy of Kazakhstan has been designed in such a way that it maintains a strategic partnership between Russia and Kazakhstan.

In order to examine the consistency between Kazakh foreign policy and Russian strategic interests the thesis firstly describes Russian strategic interests in the post-communist territories and Kazakh foreign policies and approaches on such issues as

¹⁹ Hanks, R.R. (2009) 'Multi-vector politics' and Kazakhstan's emerging role as a geo-strategic player in Central Asia. *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies*. Vol. 11, Issue 3 (p. 257)

²⁰ Foreign Policy Concept of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2014-2020 (available on <http://www.mfa.kz/index.php/en/foreign-policy/foreign-policy-concept-for-2014-2020-republic-of-kazakhstan> 2.04.2016)

Eurasian Economic Union, political and military interventions of Russian Federation in post-communist states, ethnic mobilizations within the Russian Federation and the use of Kazakh natural resources. Secondly, the thesis will focus on the nationalist project of Kazakhization to show how this policy of Kazakh political elite has been in harmony with the Russian-Kazakh strategic partnership. To achieve these aims both primary resources and secondary resources will be employed. Primary resources will mainly include the relevant agreements between the two states, official statements on relevant issues (both in Russian and Kazakh languages) and media reports published in Russian and Kazakh languages explaining the tendencies of political elites on Russian-Kazakh relations, and the beliefs of Kazakh political elite about the role of Russia in the region. Secondary resources will consist of articles, books and technical reports on the aforementioned themes published in English, Russian, Kazakh and Turkish. In order to examine the dependency between Russia and Kazakhstan the thesis describes the strategic interests of Russia and the major foreign policy orientations of Kazakhstan.

The thesis argued that Russian strategic interests in the post-communist territories are associated with the superpower status of Russia. Without protecting such strategic interests Russia cannot maintain its superpower position in the international system. These interests include an effective role of Russia in the region towards:

- a) controlling the process of transferring natural resources from the region to Europe and other parts of the world,
- b) protecting the friendly regimes through mobilizing economic, political and military support,

- c) maintaining its security-provider role through discouraging any politico-military intervention by other international powers.

The thesis consists of four chapters. Chapter 1 presents the importance of the topic, research question and hypotheses, methodology, and definition of key terms and literature review. Chapter 2 examines the strategic interests of Russia in the region in the post-communist era and Russian perspectives on the Eurasian Economic Union. Chapter 3 elaborates on the Kazakh foreign policy orientations and official arguments on such issues as the Eurasian Economic Union, interstate relations in the region, ethnic mobilizations within the Russian Federation and the use of Kazakh natural resources. Chapter 4 evaluates the relationship between Russian federation and the Republic of Kazakhstan towards demonstrating how Kazakh foreign policy is dependent on Russia through the notion of strategic partnership, and speculates about the possibility of change in the Russian-Kazakh relations.

1.3 Literature Review

Each state designs its foreign policies aiming at achieving particular objectives domestically and internationally. But for each government domestic politics has primary importance. This part of the thesis aims at a) analyzing the literature on the dependency of foreign policy on the domestic politics, and further apply this theory to the foreign policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan and its effect on strategic partnership with Russia; b) Analyzing theoretical material on collective identity formation and later attempting to apply it on the example of the post-Soviet territory and c) Applying dependency theory on the collaboration between Kazakhstan and Russia in energy sector.

1.3.1 The Two-Level Game and Strategic Partnership

A strategic partnership is a “close relationship between two states that seek for mutual gains”. Their interests often might be not shared but competitive.²¹ This definition perfectly fits to the situation of Kazakhstan and Russia who historically have very close relations, but at some points their interests are in clash. For Kazakhstan that seeks for the promotion of its national interests, a friendly partnership with such power is of vital importance.

Policy makers are involved in a so-called “two-level game” as Putnam puts it.²² The internationally significant decisions or in other words foreign policy decisions are being made in accordance with the relevant domestic political environment. In order to understand the state`s objectives in the international arena, the role and ambitions of its domestic actors should be examined.

Firstly, the two relevant concepts, namely, “foreign” and “policy” need to be defined separately. Here foreign or external refers to something which is outside of the boundaries of the state or something which takes place outside of the boundaries of the state. Although the foreign/external is outside of its boundaries a sovereign state is supposed to have a degree of control over what happens in this. Christopher Hill defines foreign policy as “the sum of official external relations conducted by an independent actor (usually a state) in international relations”.²³ Can the decisions relating to external relations be made independently of the domestic conditions? There is a strong correlation between both levels of policy and most of the time

²¹ Kay, Sean (2000) What Is a Strategic Partnership?, *Problems of Post-Communism*, 47:3, (pp. 15-24)

²² Putnam, R. (1988). Diplomacy and Domestic politics: The logic of two-level games”. *International Organization* 42 (pp. 427-460)

²³ Hill, C. (2003). The Changing politics of foreign policy. *Palgrave Macmillan* (p. 3)

foreign policy is being formulated from within the state's boundaries. Christopher Hill claims that foreign policy is less likely to be possessed by the country with denied sovereignty. In other words, foreign policy rests on the effectiveness of the state on the domestic level and internationally. He clearly insists that it can never be estranged "from the domestic context out of which it springs".²⁴ But the dependence of foreign policy from the internal issues of the state is not general for all states and cases. Hill classifies the states into two categories regarding the relationship between external politics and domestic politics.; outside-in states, where international behavior of the state defines its domestic politics, and inside-out states, where internal characteristics of the state largely affect its external politics. The first type includes those states that were formed through competitive politics in Renaissance Europe and under the changes on the world market. These states were consolidated through the Westphalian model, and as a result provided the ground for internationally recognized territorial nation-states, and the principle of inviolability of domestic politics. The second type suits the view that the states emerged as a result of social contract, and have a primordial constitutional nature.²⁵ On the basis of this classification Kazakhstan should be called an outside-in state, whose international relations somehow dictate its domestic policies. For example whereas the language policy in the Republic was aimed at strengthening native language, at the same time this policy has been restricted to avoid any discrimination against those who do not speak Kazakh which is part and parcel of the Kazakh Constitution.²⁶ Each state cares about its citizens that live abroad. In Kazakhstan Russian speaking citizens constitute more than 20% of population. Hence it seems that Kazakhstan should not attempt to oppress any Russian speaking citizens on the

²⁴ Ibid (p. 37)

²⁵ Ibid. (pp. 30-32)

²⁶ The Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Section II: The Individual and Citizen. Article 14

basis of language in order to keep good relationships with the closest partner of the Republic stable. In one of his recent speeches the Kazakh President stated that it is not acceptable to see someone who intentionally uses Kazakh language when communicate someone who speak Russian. In order to stress the bilingual character of the state the president clearly stated that “If the citizen addresses the issue in Russian, it means that the answer should be provided in Russian!”.²⁷ He emphasized that the Republic of Kazakhstan is multinational state and in accordance with the “Law on Languages” the rights of those who do not speak Kazakh language shouldn’t be violated. Thus it is seen that the Russian presence is still there manifesting itself through its language which is protected by law. Moreover, Nazarbayev tends to promote not only bilinguality, but trilingualism. For years a number of experimental schools in Kazakhstan have been teaching in three languages, namely in Kazakh, Russian, and English. According to the plan of the Head of State Kazakhstani children should be able to know Kazakh language because it is a state language; they have to know Russian language, because it is a language of the important neighbor Russia and one of the six UN languages, and through Russian language Kazakh people opened for themselves “great literature and great culture”; English is very important because it can provide access to science and technology, bearing in mind that nowadays 85% of scientific works are published in this language.²⁸

²⁷ Nazarbayev prikazal uvolnyat otkazyvayuschikhsya otvechat na russkom chinovnikov [Nazarbayev instructed to dismiss officials who refuses to answer in Russian] (Article available on <https://lenta.ru/news/2016/02/16/skorovybory/> 26.02.2016)

²⁸ President RK prizval kazakhstantsev k tolerantnosti i razvitiyu trehyazychiya v strane [President urged to tolerance and the development of trilingualism in country]. (2015) *Strategy 2050* (available at <https://strategy2050.kz/ru/news/3792> accessed 20.05. 2016)

In his “Theory of International Politics”, Kenneth Waltz argued that in order to understand the entire international politics, its parts should be studied separately.²⁹ Thus national politics and bureaucracies should be studied in order to understand the way the state behaves on the international arena. Waltz claimed that nations with different domestic conditions use different foreign policy strategies. This demonstrates the inevitable effect of the internal environment on international relations.³⁰ The President of Kazakhstan and other policymakers have always emphasized geographical position of Kazakhstan and mentioned the new type of the state. Their objective is to contribute to the revival of the Silk Road economy and build a huge system of communications aiming at making Kazakhstan the key actor connecting different parts of the continent. During the UN Summit for the Adoption of Development Agenda in New York in 2015 Nazarbayev once again emphasized the importance of this project:

This will benefit many countries reducing transit time from the Asia-Pacific region to Europe. We are paving its infrastructure, building railways and highways linking the Pacific Ocean to Europe and the Middle East.³¹

To sum up, the Kazakhstani leader has very ambitious purposes which cannot be obviously reached without the cooperation with with the Russian Federation. In order to preserve relations with Moscow friendly Kazakhstan should protect the Russian minority living in Kazakhstan from any manifestation of nationalism. Multi-vector policy of Kazakhstan enables it to balance between major powers in the region while still remaining close to Russia. Such foreign policy objectives somehow dictates Kazakhstani domestic situation, thus due to the importance from the cooperation

²⁹ Waltz, K. (1979). *Theory of International Politics*. *McGraw Hill Inc*. First edition. (p. 19)

³⁰ *Ibid.* (pp. 60-72)

³¹ N. Nazarbayev’s speech at the UN Summit for the Adoption of Development Agenda, New York. 27.09.2015 (Available on <http://astanatimes.com/2015/09/kazakh-president-outlines-mdg-successes-calls-for-portions-of-defence-budgets-to-be-diverted-to-development/>)

with Russian Federation there seems to be strong dependency of the whole Kazakhstan on Moscow's decisions, remained from the long Soviet period, though with some barriers. Next part of this work will draw on this argument.

1.3.2 Constraints to Collective Identity Formation on the Post-Soviet Territories

Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) is aimed at functioning as a major integration project between former Soviet republics. Although leaders of its member states claim that there is nothing apart from common economic objectives behind this formation, there is evidence indicating the opposite.³² Among the hundreds of bilateral agreements signed between the Russian Federation and Kazakhstan, there is a Collective Security Treaty Organization which manifest itself as an analogue of NATO on the post-Soviet territories, and binds its member states to cooperate in case of military threat. On the 30th of January, 2013 the two states signed an agreement to establish a joint regional air-defence system in Astana.³³ This agreement is not something absolutely new, rather it is kind of “joint military duty”, coordination of actions in different situations, information exchange, as well as joint trainings. Headquarters, crews of both states will be included in a single regional air defense system and the circle of their tasks will be expanded.³⁴ And by the late part of 2015 the Russian Federation completed the delivery of S-300 missile defense system to Kazakhstan free of charge. This demonstrates that there is close military cooperation between Russia and Kazakhstan aiming at protecting Russian strategic interests in the Republic of Kazakhstan. Astana and Moscow plan to install common network defense system which will be an adequate answer to the possible threats from the

³² Customs Union, Common Economic Space and Eurasian Economic Union (Available at <http://www.mfa.kz/index.php/en/foreign-policy/integration-processes/customs-union>)

³³ Fedorenko, V. (2015) Timeline of Central Asia (1918-2014). *Rethink Paper 21* (p. 48)

³⁴ Gavrilov, Y. (2013) Nebo na dvoih [heaven for two] *Rossiyskaya gazeta [Russian Newspaper]*. (available at <http://rg.ru/2013/12/29/pvo-site.html> 12.04.2016)

outside.³⁵ As the Russian Minister of Defence emphasized in his interview during a briefing right after two sides signed the aforementioned agreement on a joint regional air-defence system, “the agreement is serious, pervasive, and in the future it will merger our information spaces, integration, which of course will increase the security of our states”.³⁶

During the Soviet period Kazakhstan and Russia had a very long common history. Deeply intertwined and being one state they started to create their collective identity formation. But speaking about the relations between Moscow and Astana today is it correct to insist on the possibility of collective identity formation within the framework of the new formation – Eurasian Economic Union? Or it is a merely an alliance between two independent states pursuing their own self interests? This thesis argues that twenty five years of Kazakh independence largely affected the international identity of both states. Although a number of weak attempts to create a union of newly independent states have been made, all of them have failed for a number of reasons.

On the road of the collective identity formation Alexander Wendt emphasized a major sticking points which stem from state egoism. He accentuates five types of it, classifying them into two categories: three of them are associated with domestic and two are linked to the systemic issues.³⁷ We shall examine former, aiming at

³⁵ Russia delivers free S-300 systems to Kazakhstan (Available on <http://sputniknews.com/military/20151223/1032201316/russia-kazakhstan-defense-s300-delivery.html>)

³⁶ Nikolayeva, A. (2013) Pod edinyim schitom [under the common shield] (available on <http://www.interfax-russia.ru/print.asp?id=463136&type=view> 7.04.2016)

³⁷ Wendt A.(1994) Collective identity formation and the International State. *American Political Science Review*. Vol.88, No.2 (pp.387-388)

considering them as possible answers to the issue of successful integration on the post-Soviet territories.

The first domestic category claims that the single fact of being associated with a group generates in newly independent states “in-group favoritism and out-group discrimination”.³⁸ After the dissolution of the USSR, an independent Kazakhstan and an independent Russia immediately started to build their own identities and this has served as a major barrier which makes their common future less optimistic. During his visit to the Diplomatic Academy of Russia located in Moscow, the Chairman of the Senate of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Kassymzhomart Tokayev argued that the main problem of the Eurasian Economic Commission is the fact that it is represented by politicians from member states. Each one of them believes that it is his or her obligation to protect the interests of his/her state. This should never happen in any international organization, and in order to achieve fruitful results in this economic integration project, its member states should act as one system, not as a sum of self-interested parties.³⁹ Secondly, drawing on the aforementioned argument by Christopher Hill about outside-in and inside-out states,⁴⁰ those states that largely depend on their societies to survive politically might use other states in order to do so.⁴¹ Hence, the foreign policy of Russia which depends on its domestic situation in order to survive obligates Moscow to find allies among other states. In this sense the Central Asian region is of a primary strategic importance. Thirdly, these two assumptions constitute a base for the third one which focuses on nationalism.

³⁸ Ibid (p. 387)

³⁹ Tokayev: soyuznicheskiye otnosheniya s Rossiey – bezuslovnyi prioritet dlya Kazakhstana [allied relations with Russia - the absolute priority for Kazakhstan] (Article available on <http://mir24.tv/news/politics/12611458> 2.03.2016)

⁴⁰ Hill, C. (2003). The Changing politics of foreign policy. *Palgrave Macmillan* (p. 30-32)

⁴¹ Ibid.

Governments pay much attention on national sentiments in order to make societal self conceptions stronger⁴². After being under the influence of the Sovietic identity for a long period, Kazakhstan has been extensively Russified. From the 16th of December, 1991 the Kazakh political elite attempted to get rid of this `undesired past` by initiating a nation-building process through a nationalistic project of “Kazakhization”. The Kazakhization policy manifested itself firstly through an empowered language policy. It is stated in “The State program for the development and functioning of languages in the Republic of Kazakhstan” that the objective of this program is a functioning of the state language as the most important instrument for the reinforcement of the Kazakhstani national unity, whereas the languages of all Kazakhstani ethnic groups must not be subject to any kind of oppression.⁴³. This policy clearly shows that while the Kazakh language is no doubt seen as a tool uniting the nation, the importance of preservation and the absence of any oppression on languages of minorities is a must. As a result the Russian language became one of the official languages because of the significant percentage of Russian diaspora living in Kazakhstan as well as many Russian-speaking Kazakhs. And while Kazakhstan is quite compromising on the language issue, its policy implies that while nobody oppresses citizen if she speaks in any other language, she has to master the state language.

1.3.3 Kazakhstani Dependency on Russian Federation in Energy Sector

Rich natural resources play a major role in Kazakh foreign policy making. Though the Kazakh multi-vector foreign policy obligates the state to be friendly with every major player, the officials repeatedly emphasized that the momentous partner of the

⁴² Ibid

⁴³ The Strategy of Development of the Republic of Kazakhstan (available on http://www.akorda.kz/en/official_documents/strategies_and_programs)

Republic of Kazakhstan is Russia.⁴⁴ This role of Russia in Kazakhstan is strengthened by the dependency of Kazakhstan on the export of its natural resources through the territory of the Russian Federation. This part of thesis aims to analyze economic relations between Russia and Kazakhstan in energy sector from the dependency theorists cut.

Due to the oil-led development of the economy and absence of access to the sea, Kazakh foreign policy follows a multi-vector dimension, because it is the best way nowadays to deal with transportation constraints. Moreover, it allows Astana to balance between major powers in a region without being totally dependent on Moscow's will. Thus this multi-vector policy shapes the domestic policy of the country allowing national identities only limited role. Experts are convinced that the Kazakh leadership forces good relations of the state with such important players such as; Russia, the European Union, China and the United States.⁴⁵ Kazakh dependency on other states in terms of the export of its primary commodity – energy resources – justifies the attempt to apply a dependency theory to the case of Kazakhstan.

Due to the landlocked location of Kazakhstan it does not have total control over the utilization of its natural resources as they have to transport them via pipelines that run through the territory of other countries. The export sector is growing rapidly via north pipelines and railways through Russia, via the Black Sea and the Persian Gulf,

⁴⁴ Tokayev: soyuznicheskiye otnosheniya s Rossiey – bezuslovnyi prioritet dlya Kazakhstana [allied relations with Russia - the absolute priority for Kazakhstan] (Article available on <http://mir24.tv/news/politics/12611458>)

⁴⁵ Ipek, P. (2007) The role of oil and gas in Kazakhstan's foreign policy: Looking East or West? *Europe-Asia Studies*. Vol. 59. Issue 7

and to the East, China. This explains the multi-vector direction of Kazakh foreign policy, chosen by the government.⁴⁶

Historically, Kazakhstan was largely dependent on Russia in its oil policy since its first year of Independence because of the fact that Kazakh oil could reach Western customers only via pipelines in the Russian Federation. Due to the dependency on transit through Russian territory, Kazakhstan's position is somehow vulnerable because it is not easy, and even almost impossible to build a new route bypassing its northern neighbor. Thus the energy sector has become a very important tool of foreign policy by Russia towards Kazakhstan. For instance, in the so-called "New Great Game", there is a competition over the control of the Caspian Sea basin between a numbers of players including the Russian Federation.⁴⁷ Even though each actor has his own objectives, Russian positions are still strong and favored. In order to break the Russian monopoly in a region, there is a need of new pipelines bypassing the huge territory of the Russian Federation. As is claimed by scientists, these attempts to weaken Russian influence by Caspian states are "at the heart of Caspian geo-politics".⁴⁸ Kazakhstani policy makers have been trying to break the dependency on oil and to diversify the economy of the state.⁴⁹ But this is not as easy as it seems. Famous dependency theorists claim that even though peripheral, a dependent state is no longer restricted to the production of raw materials because other sectors of their economy might be strong as well. Thus, a state has to take loans in order to develop their economy. And even if its economy becomes richer, it

⁴⁶ Zabortseva, Y. (2014) Rethinking the economic Relationship between Kazakhstan and Russia. *Europe-Asia Studies*. Vol. 66, No. 2 (p. 316)

⁴⁷ Alam, S. (2002) Pipeline politics in the Caspian Sea Basin. *Strategic Analysis*. Vol. 26, Issue 1 (pp. 4-7)

⁴⁸ McCarthy, J. (2000). The geo-politics of Caspian oil. *Janes Intelligence Review*, 12(7), (p. 21)

⁴⁹ Zabortseva, Y. N. (2009) 'A Structural Approach to Diversification of the Emerging Economy of Kazakhstan', *International Journal of Economic Policy in Emerging Economies (IJEPEE)*, 2, 1.

doesn't mean that the state has overcome its dependence. Rather another loan will follow. "In most cases if such an economy flourishes, its roots have been planted by those who hold the lending notes".⁵⁰

But the reality shows that Russia does not play a major role as an investor in Kazakhstan. In fact it goes after the European Union states such as Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and after the US in terms of investment, according to data provided by the National Bank of the Republic of Kazakhstan.⁵¹ Hence economically Kazakhstan is not dependent on the Russian Federation today. It is rather interdependent on two resource cursed countries.

In conclusion, Russia understands the importance of Kazakhstan in its foreign policy and tries to preserve the republic close by using different sorts of leverage such as; oil transportation, easy access to the Russian market, the Russian minority in Kazakhstan; and efforts to tie Kazakhstan through different types of bilateral agreements that ensure compliance of the rules which strengthens the strategic partnership between the two states. For instance, the Agreement on Friendship, as well as the Cooperation and Mutual Assistance treaty between the two states. On the other hand it has been proclaimed that as equal and sovereign states, Russia and Kazakhstan should respect each other, should never become a member of any organization whose objectives are directed against any of them, and will cooperate

⁵⁰ Cardoso, F., Faletto, E. (1979) "Dependency and Development in Latin America". *University of California Press LTD.* (xxiii)

⁵¹ Natsional'nyi Bank Kazakhstana, 2009 database, 'Valovii pritok inostrannikh pryamikh investitsii po stranam' [Foreign Investments to Kazakhstan by main country investors], (available on www.nationalbank.kz/cont/publish350365_27988.pdf accessed 7.04.2016)

on the basis of equality and mutual benefits.⁵² So, on the basis of this statement it can be seen that for Kazakhstan the most important point here is equality and mutual benefits which means that this cooperation is based on rationality and national interests, whereas for the Russian Federation this agreement ensures a strong alliance and loyalty from Kazakhstan.

⁵² Dogovor o druzhbe, sotrudnichestve i vzaimnoi pomoschi mezhdu Respublikoi Kazakhstan i Rossiyskoi Federatsyiei [Kazakh-Russian Agreement on Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance] (Available on http://online.zakon.kz/Document/?doc_id=1007137)

Chapter 2

RUSSIAN STRATEGIC INTERESTS IN CENTRAL ASIA AND KAZAKHSTAN

2.1 Introduction

After a sudden collapse of the Soviet Union the newly emerged Russian Federation dealt with a number of economic, political and social issues and hence was unable to develop any permanent policy towards its former territories.⁵³ Yet there was an attempt to influence post-Soviet states through a newly established loose union between post communist republics namely the Commonwealth of Independent States. This union, however, was not viable due to its weak institutional framework, which was caused by the reluctance of newly independent states to accept restrictions on their sovereignty. At that time there was no single binding mechanism to guarantee consent with certain obligations. Even a permanent judicial body the Economic Court of the CIS had only nominal role and could only recommend.⁵⁴

During this time some new external actors began to be interested in the Central Asian region aiming at gaining influence on the control of huge hydrocarbon resources. They had to compete with Russian monopoly and as a consequence Central Asian region became the arena of “the New Great Game”.⁵⁵

⁵³ Zhang, X., Hwang, S-S. (2006) The micro consequences of macro level social transition: How did Russians survive in the 1990s? *Social indicators research*. 82: (pp. 332 – 360)

⁵⁴ Dragneva, R. & Wolczuk, K. (2012) ‘Russia, the Eurasian Customs Union and the EU: Cooperation, Stagnation or Rivalry?’, *Briefing Paper REP BP (Chatham House)*, (pp. 2-3)

⁵⁵ Fatima, Q., Zafar, S. (2014) New Great Game: Players, Interests, Strategies and Central Asia. *A Research Journal of South Asian Studies*. Vol. 29, No.2 (pp. 628 -631)

After the resurgence of Russian demands in the regions under the leadership of Vladimir Putin, Russia has aimed to regain its superpower position which can never be completed without establishing political control over the Central Asian States. As a Central Asian state Kazakhstan, began to play an important role because of its strategic partnership with the Russian Federation. Moreover its natural resources and unique geographical location made Kazakhstan a gate to the rest of the Central Asian States with which Russia does not have a common border, Moscow seeks to secure its strategic interests. This part of the thesis aims at examining these interests and the ways through which Russia tries to secure its control over the region in general and over Kazakhstan in particular.

Kazakh - Russian relations seem to be strategic as implied in the Treaty on Good-Neighborliness and Alliance in the XXI Century and the Agreement on Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance. Moreover, the FPC of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2014-2020 claims that Astana will continue strengthen cooperation between the two states “in all spheres of political, economic, trade and cultural cooperation”.⁵⁶

Both Russia and Kazakhstan have their own objectives to reach from this partnership. This thesis claims that Russian strategic interests in Central Asia and Kazakhstan in particular are as follows:

- Stability in the Central Asia and the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO);
- Control over transportation of Kazakh oil;

⁵⁶ Foreign Policy Concept of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2014-2020 (available at <http://www.mfa.kz/index.php/en/foreign-policy/foreign-policy-concept-for-2014-2020-republic-of-kazakhstan> accessed 28.05.2016)

- Support to Russian minority living in Kazakhstan;
- Economic integration processes and the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU).

In order to prove or reject the hypothesis about the dependency of Kazakh foreign policy on Russian Federation this thesis describes and analyses Russian strategic interests in a region, and Kazakh ruling elite's stance towards them.

2.2 Stability in Central Asia and the Collective Security Treaty Organization

Russia is a multi-ethnic and religiously diverse state. Religious organizations were repressed during the Soviet period. Leadership considered religion as a threat to the Soviet order and through atheist ceremonies and propaganda campaigns they aimed at demonstrating the falsity of religion, so that people can eventually realize that they don't need religion in their lives anymore.⁵⁷ But after the collapse of the USSR a variety of religious organizations Orthodox and Muslim communal groups and others started to increase their activity. Russian Orthodoxy is the dominant religion in Russian Federation. Islam is the second largest religion with more than 14 millions Muslim.⁵⁸ As well as the whole Central Asian region, stable situation in Kazakhstan is strategically important for Russia as stable Central Asia will prevent the spread of extremism and drug trafficking from the South.⁵⁹ In contrast it is believed that destabilization of the situation in Kazakhstan will inevitably lead to the collapse of the whole Central Asia, which as a result will negatively affect Russian Muslim

⁵⁷ Froese, P. (2008) A plot to kill God: Findings from the Soviet experiment in secularization. (p. 4-5)

⁵⁸ Bacon, E. (2014) Contemporary Russia. Third edition. *Palgrave Macmillan*(pp. 59-63)

⁵⁹ Laumulin, M. (2009) Strategicheskie interesy Rossii v stranakh Tsentralnoi Azii na sovremennom etape [Contemporary strategic interests of Russia in Central Asia]. *Tsentralnaya Aziya I Kavkaz [Central Asia and Caucasus]* №3(63) (p.109)

population.⁶⁰ In support of this opinion, The Minister of Defence for the Russian Federation Sergey Shoigu has visited Astana in order to withdraw from the lease more than 1.7 millions of hectares of Kazakh land which they previously used as test sites, and at the same time to negotiate with his colleagues regarding regional security and the fight against terrorism, and possible future assistance in the framework of the CSTO.⁶¹ In this respect the creation of the organization of collective security is a powerful tool to control extremist activism in the region which appeared to endanger Russian national security. A common security policy and organization led by Russia enables Russia to have indirect control over this region. As a result of this perspective the CSTO was formed in 2002 on the basis of old military alliance among post-Soviet states. The purpose of this organization stated in Article 3 of the Charter of the CSTO:

The purposes of the Organization are to strengthen peace and international and regional security and stability and to ensure the collective defense of the independence, territorial integrity and sovereignty of the member States, in the attainment of which the member States shall give priority to political measures.⁶²

The military and military-technical sphere is also one of the main areas of cooperation between Moscow and the Central Asian states. Russia provides a possibility to train many Kazakhstani military personnel under very favorable terms. Membership in CSTO provides considerable support to each party to this organization when it's needed. Through training, coordinating, and delivery systems

⁶⁰ Rossiyskiye eksperty: kto stoit za atakoy na Aktobe [Russian experts: Who was behind the attack on Aktobe] (2016) *Sputnic News* (available at <http://ru.sputniknews-uz.com/analytics/20160606/2963314.html> accessed 08.06.2016)

⁶¹ Shoigu otpravilsya v Kazakhstan obsuzhdat' protivodeystvie terrorizmu [Shoigu went to Kazakhstan to discuss the fight against terrorism] *Forbes* (available at <http://www.forbes.ru/news/322097-shoigu-otpravilsya-v-kazakhstan-obsuzhdat-protivodeistvie-terrorizmu> accessed 10.06.2016)

⁶² Ustav Organizatsii Dogovora o kollektivnoi bezopasnosti. Stat'ya 3 [Charter of the Collective Security Treaty Organization. Article 3] (available at http://www.odkb-csto.org/documents/detail.php?ELEMENT_ID=124 accessed 10.04.2016)

CSTO assists Central Asian member states in fighting such issues as religious extremism, smuggling and drug trafficking. Cooperation in the framework of this organization not only allows local officers to train in Russian military academies, but also delivers some military equipment.⁶³ Moscow has already completed concrete steps towards closer military cooperation with Kazakhstan, delivering free S-300 missile defense system. Furthermore, there is a common understanding towards installing a common network defense system which will be an adequate answer to the possible threats.⁶⁴ This organization binds its members and obligates them to take action if conflict occurs.⁶⁵

The Collective Security Treaty Organization consists of such organs as:

1. The Council on Collective Security
2. The Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs
3. The Council of Ministers of Defense
4. Committee of Secretaries of the Security Council
5. Permanent Council.⁶⁶

The Council is the primary body of the CSTO and includes the Presidents of the Member States. Supreme administrative official of the Organization is Secretary

⁶³ Frost, A. (2009) The Collective Security Treaty Organisation, The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, and Russia's Strategic goals in Central Asia. *Central Asia-Caucasus Institute*. China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly. Vol.7, No 3 (p 84)

⁶⁴ Russia delivers free S-300 systems to Kazakhstan (Available on <http://sputniknews.com/military/20151223/1032201316/russia-kazakhstan-defense-s300-delivery.html>)

⁶⁵ Laumulin, M. (2009) Strategicheskie interesy Rossii v stranakh Tsentralnoi Azii na sovremennom etape [Contemporary strategic interests of Russia in Central Asia]. *Tsentralnaya Aziya I Kavkaz [Central Asia and Caucasus]* №3(63) (p.117)

⁶⁶ Ustav Organizatsii Dogovora o kollektivnoi bezopasnosti. Stat'ya 11 [Charter of the Collective Security Treaty Organization. Article 11] (available at http://www.odkb-csto.org/documents/detail.php?ELEMENT_ID=124 10.04.2016)

General. The Secretary General is appointed for the period of three years of the member states of the CSTO, and shall manage work of permanent working bodies.⁶⁷

Permanent working bodies of the Collective Security Treaty Organization are the Organization Secretariat and the Joint Staff of the Organization. The Secretariat provides organizational, information, analytical and consultative support to CSTO bodies, and located in Moscow. The Joint staff provides support to the Councils of Ministries of Defense and also located in Moscow.⁶⁸

The Collective Security Treaty Organization is seen as a tool to achieve particular objectives of Moscow due to increased US and Chinese presence in the Central Asian region, namely:

1. “To maintain position of power and influence for Moscow in the whole region”.
2. “To support the pro-Moscow regimes”.
3. “To limit American and Chinese influence from the region”.⁶⁹

Thus the fact that both permanent working bodies are situated in Russian Federation only supports this opinion, and even though member states cooperate on the equal basis this Organization acts under the leadership of Moscow. Another fact reinforcing this argument is that the highest ranking non-head of state is Secretary General (SG). Currently the SG of the Collective Security Treaty Organization is Nicolai Bordyuzha – citizen of Russian Federation, Russian General and the former

⁶⁷ Ibid. Article 17

⁶⁸ Ibid, Article 18

⁶⁹ Frost, A. (2009) The Collective Security Treaty Organisation, The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, and Russia’s Strategic goals in Central Asia. *Central Asia-Caucasus Institute. China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly*. Vol.7, No 3 (p. 87)

head of Russian National Security Council who is very close to Russian President V. Putin and Prime Minister D. Medvedev.⁷⁰

2.3 Control Over Oil Pipelines

Kazakhstan alone is claimed to become one of the world's top-10 oil producers. According to the report of the US energy Information Administration, published on the 11th of February, 2016 at CNN Money, the top 10 oil producers include the United States, Russia, China, Iran, Mexico Canada, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, UAE, and Kuwait respectively with the amount of oil produced per day that ranges from 2.7 to 13.7 millions of barrels per day, as it shown in Figure 2.1⁷¹

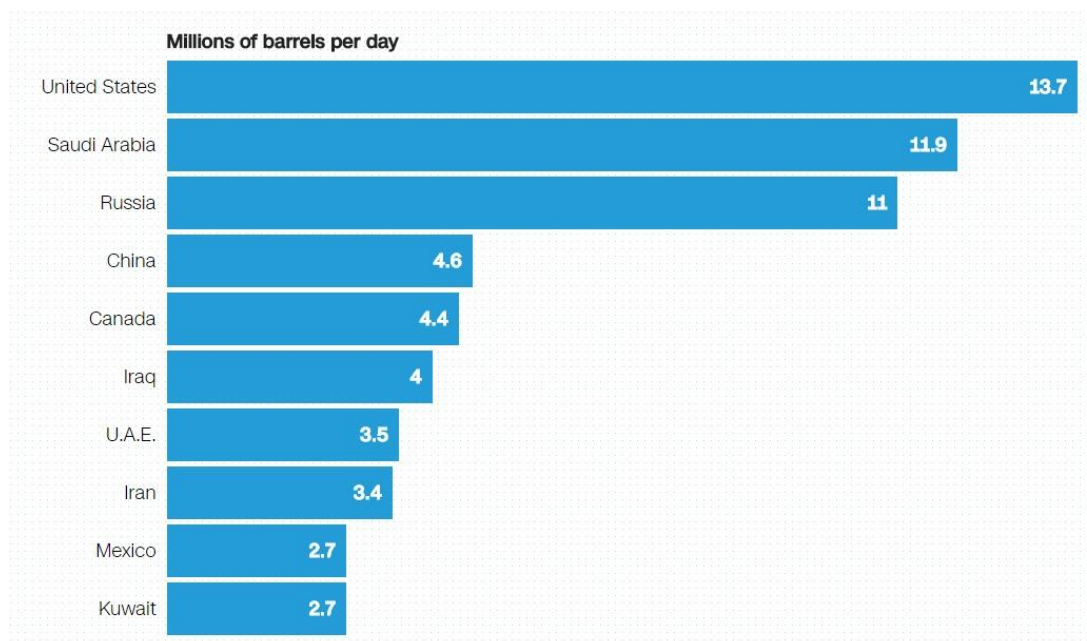


Figure 1. Top 10 Oil Producers

Kazakhstan is situated between China, the Russian Federation and the Central Asian republics, and thus doesn't have direct access to the sea.⁷² It has to rely on its neighboring countries which make Kazakhstan vulnerable to the whims and caprices

⁷⁰ Ibid (p 88)

⁷¹ CNN Money (2016) World's top oil producers. (available at <http://money.cnn.com/interactive/news/economy/worlds-biggest-oil-producers/> 30.05.2016)

⁷² Kaiser, M.J. Pulsipher, A.G. (2007) A review of the oil and gas sector in Kazakhstan. Energy Policy 35 (p. 1300)

of these states in terms of the transportation of its oil. Russia aims at controlling the process of transferring natural resources from the rich Central Asian region to Europe and other parts of the world.⁷³ Today it still maintains a leading position over the transportation of Kazakh oil, though it faces competition today from other competitors.

Most of Kazakh oil produces are being transported from three giant oil fields notably Tengiz, Karachaganak, and Kashagan. Successful exploitation of these oil fields depends on the developed pipelines through which the oil will be exported to different directions around the world.

Till date, according to the data provided by the Kazakh national company “KazMunayGaz” the main oil transport routes for Kazakhstan are Atyrau-Samara pipeline, Caspian Pipeline Consortium (CPC), pipeline Atasu-Alashankou, and marine terminal of Aktau.⁷⁴

The Atyrau-Samara pipeline is one of the biggest routes for the Republic of Kazakhstan today. It transfers oil to the ports of Primorsk, Ust-luga, Novorossiysk to the markets in the North-West, Central and Eastern Europe.⁷⁵

The Caspian Pipeline Consortium extends from the Tengiz oil field to the oil terminals on the Black Sea, close to the Novorossiysk port.⁷⁶

⁷³ Laumulin, M. (2009) Strategicheskie interesy Rossii v stranakh Tsentralnoi Azii na sovremennom etape [Contemporary strategic interests of Russia in Central Asia]. *Tsentralnaya Aziya I Kavkaz [Central Asia and Caucasus]* №3(63) (p.109)

⁷⁴ KazMunaiGaz. Oil transportation. (available at <http://www.kmg.kz/en/manufacturing/oil/> 14.04.2016)

⁷⁵ Atyrau-Samara (available at http://www.kmg.kz/en/manufacturing/oil/atyrau_samara/ 14/04/2016)

Russian influence in the transportation of Kazakh natural resources is seen as something natural due to historical reasons. After the collapse of the Soviet Union all Central Asian pipelines that crossed Russia became subject to its transit regime. Being the most important transit State for Kazakhstani oil, Kazakh oil companies are constantly at a disadvantage. This is so because Russia itself is also an oil producing country and intermittently blocks Kazakh access to Europe as was the case in 2005 when Russian Transneft gave up its contract with KazMunayGas because it also transported oil to Lithuania.⁷⁷

Aiming at diversifying its oil transportation routes and to become more independent off Russia in terms of the transportation of its oil, Kazakhstan together with China have worked on the construction of a pipeline that will connect Kazakhstan with its eastern neighbor. First, the Atasu-Alashankou project was implemented. Further JSC “KazTransOil” and the China National Corporation for exploration and development of oil set up “Kazakhstan-China pipeline” LLP on a basis of equality. The transportation of oil began in 2006. The Kazakh national company “KazMunayGas” exported 11.7 tons of oil to China in 2014.⁷⁸

Apart from pipelines, Kazakh oil is being transmitted via the Caspian Sea from the marine terminal of Aktau to the Baku – Tbilisi – Ceyhan pipeline for onward transport mainly to Europe. This also enables Kazakhstan as it reduces its

⁷⁶ Caspian Pipeline Consortium. (available at <http://www.kmg.kz/en/manufacturing/oil/ktk/> 14.04.2016)

⁷⁷ Nixey, J. *The Long Goodbye: Waning Russian Influence in the South Caucasus and Central Asia. Chatham House Briefing Papers.* (p.12)

⁷⁸ Kazakhstan-China pipeline (available at http://www.kmg.kz/en/manufacturing/oil/kazakhstan_china/ 14.04.2016)

dependency on the Russian Federation for the transportation of its oil to other parts of the World.⁷⁹

To sum up, Kazakhstan has successfully developed different directions for its oil under the framework of the multi-vector foreign policy. But although today the Russian Federation faces different competitors such as China and the United States, it still remains a leading partner with Kazakhstan and still has a leading position in the region in terms of the transportation of Kazakh oil.⁸⁰ And its influence is still very strong, although Kazakh “KazMunaiGas” built a pipeline to China and attempts to diversify its transportation directions to bypass Russia.

2.4 The Policy of Kazakhization and Reaction Of Russia

For almost 70 years of the Soviet period Kazakhstan and other republics had been incorporated into a single state. This long period largely affected its demographic situation. As a result of extensive migration by Russian people to Kazakhstan after the collapse of the USSR this republic was the only one where titular nation didn't constitute a majority of the population. In order to undermine nationalistic feelings among people in Republics, the Soviet center co-opted key actors in the region; there was a large wave of indoctrination through schools and youth groups. Massive bureaucratic institutions were created in regions and controlled by the Soviet center. In non-Slavic territories there was a movement that constituted Stalinist “merging of nations” in order to create a new historical society which was the Soviet people.⁸¹ In

⁷⁹ Kazakhstan international energy data and analysis. *US energy information administration*. (2015) (available at https://www.eia.gov/beta/international/analysis_includes/countries_long/Kazakhstan/kazakhstan.pdf 20.03.2016)

⁸⁰ Foreign Policy Concept of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2014-2020 (available on <http://www.mfa.kz/index.php/en/foreign-policy/foreign-policy-concept-for-2014-2020-republic-of-kazakhstan>)

⁸¹ Bremmer, I. (1997) Post-Soviet nationalities theory: past, present and future. *New States, New Politics: Building the Post-Soviet Nations*. (p. 9)

1991, newly independent Kazakhstan immediately started building its own identity through the nationalistic policy of “Kazakhization” which sought to promote the Kazakh culture and language among its citizens.⁸² This process didn’t go unnoticed by Russia whose minority is still living on the territory of Kazakhstan. This part of thesis aims at analyzing the character of the Kazakhization policy and Russian stance towards it.

The Kazakhization policy is noticeable in a number of directions, notably the language policy, specific statutes of native Kazakhs, Kazakhization of the state economy and administration. Kazakhstan’s national communists who were purged during Stalin era have been rehabilitated and shown as national heroes. Since the late 1990s all public sector jobs required knowledge of state language. Even in the non-Kazakh speaking oblasts there were non-official pressures that gave priorities to Kazakhs. This policy gave Kazakhs a privileged and specific status. As a result of such changes representatives of Russian minority started to lose confidence in a bright future for their children. People started to migrate to their historic homeland.⁸³

President Nazarbayev believes that Kazakhstan is the homeland of the Kazakh people but at the same time Kazakh culture should not alienate the large Russian population who remained citizens of the Republic. Rather Kazakhstan should be a peculiar bridge between the East and the West, Islam and Christianity. Kazakhstan has joined a number of international organizations which are “neutral” such as the United Nations, OSCE, etc. The President issued a decree that the Kazakh language should almost immediately become the State’s language, with the exception of those

⁸² Peyrouse, S. (2007) Nationhood and the minority question in Central Asia. The Russians in Kazakhstan. *Europe-Asia Studies*. (pp. 484-487)

⁸³ Ibid

regions where non-Kazakh speakers are in the majority where this process should be carried gradually.⁸⁴ In order to avoid any discrimination among citizens, the Russian language has been given official status.⁸⁵ The Kazakh Constitution states that individuals regardless of their race, nation, and language are politically equal.⁸⁶ Thus it is possible to argue that the “Kazakhization” policy was designed in such a way as to satisfy both Moscow in terms of the absence of the oppression of Russian minority who are citizens of the Republic, and Kazakhs who as a titular nation sought the promotion and common sense of belonging through language policy, symbols and cultural reproduction. Instead of sharp reforms at the expense of the Kazakhstani minorities, this policy was applied rather steadily and cautious to make each citizen of multinational Kazakhstan feel comfortable. In response to this moderate policy of Kazakhization, the Russian Federation did not back political activism by the Russian minority in Kazakhstan which happened in the 1990s. This fact enables us to talk about interdependence, rather than the dependence of Kazakhstan on the Russian Federation. During these 25 years of independence these two states have lived friendly without any considerable conflicts which strengthen the idea that both parts comply with rules of “good neighborliness and alliance in XXI century”.

Arguably the main guarantor of the stability and harmony between national groups in Kazakhstan is President Nursultan Nazarbayev whose well designed politics prevented Kazakhstan from the risk of breakdown. Famous Zheltoqsan events back in 1986 resulted in demonstrations against newly appointed Russian to the position

⁸⁴ Brill Olcott, M. (1997) Kazakhstan: Pushing for Eurasia. *New States, New Politics: Building the Post-Soviet Nations*. (p. 553)

⁸⁵ Zakon Respubliki Kazakhstan “o yazykah v Respublike Kazakhstan”, Stat’ya 5 [The Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan “On languages in the Republic of Kazakhstan”, Article 5] (available at http://online.zakon.kz/Document/?doc_id=1008034#pos=1;-235 19.04.2016)

⁸⁶ The Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Section II: The Individual and Citizen. Article 14

of the First Secretary of Kazakh SSR's Communist Party by Kazakh students. this proves the fact that the nationality of the President is very important to Kazakhs.⁸⁷ The feature that makes him so attractive for Russians and other minorities is that he is Soviet as he started his political carrier during the Soviet Union and opposed the collapse of the USSR. Another reason behind the absence of inte-rethnic conflicts totally depends on the external factors.⁸⁸

In 1990s there were a number of movements that helped the democratization process in the republic, of which most significant were; "Lad" and "Russkaya Obschina" that defended rights of Russian minorities in Kazakhstan. But since they did not have serious support from the Russian Federation, they eventually disappeared. Some of their activists moved to Russia, others simply changed occupation and became less radical.⁸⁹

Even though the number of Russians has largely decreased, they still constitute 23% of the population of Kazakhstan which is higher than in the other Central Asian states combined.⁹⁰ Due to the existence of this large group of Russians living outside of Russia, it is of strategic importance to Moscow to support the Russian minorities who still live in post-Soviet states. And it is in Russia's interests to make sure that their rights are not violated. The Russian President emphasized that one of the primary tasks for Moscow is the support of its compatriots staying abroad from any

⁸⁷ Sarsembayev, A. (1999) Imagined communities: Kazak nationalism and Kazakification in the 1990s, *Central Asian Survey*, 18:3, (p. 324)

⁸⁸ Falkowski, M. (2006) 'Russia's Policy in the Southern Caucasus and Central Asia', *CES Studies*, Centre for Eastern Studies. (p. 58).

⁸⁹ Krechetnikov, A. (2015) Russkiye v Kazakhstane: zhit' mozhno, no problemy yest'. [Russians in Kazakhstan: life is possible, though with problems] (available at http://www.bbc.com/russian/international/2015/04/150424_kazakhstan_russians)

⁹⁰ Krechetnikov, A. (2015) Russkiye v Kazakhstane: zhit' mozhno, no problemy yest'. [Russians in Kazakhstan: life is possible, though with problems] (available at http://www.bbc.com/russian/international/2015/04/150424_kazakhstan_russians)

type of discrimination, aggression. For this reason the Fund to Support and Protect the Rights of Compatriots Living Abroad functions to provide necessary help if needed.⁹¹ Culture and education are a very important factor in Russo-Kazakh relations based on a variety of documents, such as “The Russian-Kazakhstan Humanitarian Cooperation Program for 2007-2010”. This partnership covers such issues as cooperation in youth policy, assistance by the Russian side in the professional development of the teachers in Kazakhstani schools which have the Russian language as mode of instruction and assistance by Kazakhstani side in professional development of teachers of Kazakhs national schools from Russia; the conducting of different joint educational conferences, etc.⁹² For example, in 2013 the Russian Center of Science and Culture in Astana held such events as celebration of birthdays of famous Russian writers L. Tolstoy, I. Turgenev for their readership. Or there is an annual republican academic contest amongst Russian-speakers; “Language is a key to knowledge”.⁹³ The States support the organization of exchange concert tours, joint participation in different film festivals. They reached a consensus regarding the order and conditions for the broadcasting of Russian TV- and radio channels in Kazakhstan and vice versa. Parties assist each other in mass sport, sport science and medicine; carry out joint educational and training camps and tournaments in different kinds of sports such as boxing, karate, hockey, gymnastics, etc.⁹⁴

⁹¹ Ria Novosti (2015) Putin: Rossiya budet zacshicshat' interesy sootechestvennikov za rubezhom [Putin: Russia will protect interests of compatriots living abroad] (available at <http://ria.ru/society/20151105/1314237517.html> accessed 30.05.2016)

⁹² The Russian-Kazakhstan Humanitarian Cooperation Program for 2007-2010 (available at <http://docs.cntd.ru/document/902092536> accessed 15.06.2016)

⁹³ Sotrudnichestvo v gumanitarnoi sfere [partnership in humanitarian sphere] (available at http://www.rfembassy.kz/lm/dvustoronnie_otnosheniya/sotrudnichestvo_v_gumanitarnoi/ accessed 23.06.2016)

⁹⁴ Ibid.

To conclude, the Russian minority is seen both as leverage by Moscow on the Kazakhstani government and at the same time as a guarantee of protection for Astana. As long as Kazakhstani policy will be favorable for Russian compatriots, Moscow will not support any separatist movements demanding northern parts of Kazakhstan and partnership between two states will continue to be strong.⁹⁵ This partnership largely affects Kazakhstani nationalistic policy of Kazakhization, which was effective as long as it didn't cross the line. It inevitably will be constrained by Kazakhstani policy regarding large group of Russian population and Russian speaking citizens living in Kazakhstan.

2.5 Economic Integration and the Eurasian Economic Union

Ever since the collapse of the Soviet Union there have been a number of initiatives supportive of a regional integration among newly independent Post-Communist states. Russian Federation aims at reviving its superpower position and maintaining its influence on its neighborhood.⁹⁶ As the only Central Asian state that has common border with Russia, Kazakhstan is a gate through which Moscow can spread its influence. Thus no wonder that good relations with Astana are significant. Currently there is the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) that is of primary importance for Russian Federation in relations with the Republic of Kazakhstan and other member states of the organization. The significance of this organization can be understood through a review of its predecessors, even though most of them turn out to be ineffective due to weak institutional framework.

⁹⁵ Nixey, J. *The Long Goodbye: Waning Russian Influence in the South Caucasus and Central Asia. Chatham House Briefing Papers.* (p.10)

⁹⁶ Sushko, O. (2004) *The dark side of integration: Ambitions of domination in Russia's backyard, The Washington Quarterly*, 27:2, (p. 119-131)

The first organization which was established in 1991 aiming at achieving a kind of integration among Post-Communist states was Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) that consisted of 12 out of 15 post-Soviet states, as Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania sought for the integration with European Union.⁹⁷ CIS proved to be totally inefficient and incompetent to grow into something bigger like some integrated economic space with powerful supranational organ that could create a basis for further political body. The first real step on the way towards greater economic integration was an agreement on free trade area of the member states signed in 1994. The biggest problem of this model was unwillingness of states to be limited and the absence of the strong binding element.⁹⁸

By 2001 Eurasian Economic Community (EEC) was set up by less number of former Soviet States. This organization became more successful in terms of economic integration compared to its predecessors. On the basis of EEC the Eurasian Customs Union (CU) in 2006 started to function.⁹⁹ It was a form of economic integration that enabled member states to trade with one another without tariffs, while applying common customs tariff regulating trade with third party.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ Budkin, V. Two Decades of the Commonwealth of Independent States. *Problems of Economic Transition*, vol. 56, no. 2 (p. 36)

⁹⁸ Dragneva, R. & Wolczuk, K. (2012) 'Russia, the Eurasian Customs Union and the EU: Cooperation, Stagnation or Rivalry?', *Briefing Paper REP BP (Chatham House)*, (pp. 1-3)

⁹⁹ Wang, W. (2014) The Effects of Regional Integration in Central Asia. *Emerging Markets Finance & Trade*. Vol. 50, Supplement 2 (pp. 220-226)

¹⁰⁰ Treaty on the Eurasian Economic Union. Article 2: Terms and Definitions. (available at <file:///C:/Users/Aida/Downloads/TREATY%20ON%20THE%20EURASIAN%20ECONOMIC%20UNION.pdf>)

The ECU was managed by the regulatory bodies of EurAsEC. Its main body was the Mezhgossoviet (Interstate Council EurAsEC) that consist from heads of member states, and was established in 2000.¹⁰¹

Some scholars argue that Customs Union was more viable and productive. Actually the idea about the creation of it was elaborated in 1995 when Kazakhstan, Russia and Belarus signed a treaty on the formation of the CU. In 2000, it has been transformed into the Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEC) which gradually prepared the ground for the closer economic cooperation of its member states. Institutional framework was better regulated, common customs tariff was launched, and later in 2011 the border control was eliminated. In January, 2012 Single Economic Space was inaugurated and the Eurasian Economic Community Court was set up.¹⁰² Though some old issues remained the same, the Eurasian Customs Union indeed started functioning more productive.

At the end of 2014, the decision was made that the Eurasian Economic Community should be abolished under agreements signed in Minsk. As the President of Belarus Alexandr Lukashenko claimed,

EurAsEC has commendably fulfilled its mission and has laid the foundations for the Customs Union and Common Economic Space. So today's decision to reformat our interaction reflects in practical terms integration processes in post-Soviet space.¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ Krotov, I. (2011) Customs Union between the Republic of Belarus, the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation within the framework of the Eurasian Economic Community. *World Customs Journal*. Volume 5, Number 2 (p. 129)

¹⁰² Dragneva, R. & Wolczuk, K. (2012) 'Russia, the Eurasian Customs Union and the EU: Cooperation, Stagnation or Rivalry?', *Briefing Paper REP BP (Chatham House)*, (pp. 5)

¹⁰³ EurAsEC to be disbanded. (2014) *Interfax : Central Asia General Newswire* (available at <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1610245925/F74CCAF559664F64PQ/13?accountid=15792> 22.04.2016)

EurAsEC gave a way to a new economic integration project – Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) which started to function on the 1st of January, 2015 as it was scheduled in May, 2014 when the Eurasian Economic Union Treaty was signed in Astana. EAEU is an international organization of regional integration, and it includes founders of the Eurasian Customs Union - Russian Federation, Kazakhstan and Belarus. Later Armenia and Kirgystan became members of the Organization. EAEU membership allows free movement of goods, service, capital and labor power within the common economic space which is territories of member-states, as well as coordinated, agreed economic policy of parties of the organization. It was agreed by the parties that the working language of the Eurasian Economic Union shall be Russian.¹⁰⁴

The Union based on the rules of the international law, which includes a principle of sovereign equality of its member states, ensures the mutual benefit to its parties, and observes the market economy principles without any exemptions and restrictions. The Eurasian Economic Union administration bodies are Supreme Eurasian Economic Council that consists of the Presidents of the member states, Eurasian Intergovernmental Council, and Council of the Eurasian Economic Commission.¹⁰⁵

In terms of territory and population the EAEU lasts on about 20 million square kilometers which is 15% of the world land, with 182.1 millions of people living within its boundaries.¹⁰⁶ These data are impressive and significant for the world economy. But will Eurasian Economic Union prove to be a union of equal states, and

¹⁰⁴ Yevraziysky ekonomichesky soyuz nachal deystvovat. [Eurasian Economic Union started to function]. (2015) (available at <http://www.tvc.ru/news/show/id/58715> 23.04.2016)

¹⁰⁵ Eurasian Economic Integration: Facts and Figures. (2015) *Eurasian Economic Commission*. (pp. 30 - 34)

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.* (pp.10-11)

will it be mutually beneficial for each of its party's remains under a question mark. Moreover, Russia is no longer a main trading partner of the whole Central Asian region. It was replaced by fast-growing China.¹⁰⁷ Currently only two of Central Asian states are member states of Eurasian Economic Union. Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan have distinct point of view on this organization.

Even though there are talks that Dushanbe studies the question about the possible EAEU membership, it is not profitable for the Tajikistani ruling elite who control an overwhelming majority of Tajikistani companies because of a number of negative consequences. It will open access for big Russian companies without customs duties which are extremely important for Tajikistani budget, and as a result will doom Tajikistani entrepreneurs to huge losses. Moreover, China is also against the entry of the whole Central Asian region to the EAEU because it will seriously complicate its accession to the big market.¹⁰⁸

Speaking about the Eurasian Economic Union, Turkmenistani officials are always very careful and cautious. They emphasize close strategic relations and common views on many important issues with Russian Federation, and always support Moscow in such international organizations such the UN, OSCE, CIS, but they don't seek to join the EAEU.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ Nixey, J. The Long Goodbye: Waning Russian Influence in the South Caucasus and Central Asia. *Chatham House Briefing Papers*. (pp.13-14)

¹⁰⁸ Kim, Yevgeniya (2016) Poka Emomali Rahmon ustraivayet Moscvu situatsiya ostanetsya stabilnoy [Situation is stable while Emomali Rahmon suits Moscow] REGNUM (available at <http://regnum.ru/news/polit/2090517.html> accessed 2.06.2016)

¹⁰⁹ Turkmeniya schitayet Rossiya partnerom, no v EAES vstupat ne budet [Turkmenistan considers Russia as a partner, but will not join the EAEU] Ria Novosti (available at <http://ria.ru/economy/20140714/1015832476.html> accessed 2.06.2016)

The Uzbekistani leader Islam Karimov tends to be very incredulous to any Kremlin-led organizations. He was very unambiguous about the Eurasian Economic Union, claiming that leaders of member states have to understand that there is no political independence without economic independence.¹¹⁰

As a result of external pressure such as sanctions and low prices on oil, Russian influence is gradually eroding. Indeed, the Eurasian Economic Union proved to be not just ineffective, but even harmful for Kazakhstan. For instance, due to the close economic relations with Russian Federation, Kazakhstan end up being one of the most negatively affected country in the region as a result of Russian economic crisis. Devaluation of the Russian ruble led to the devaluation of Kazakhstani tenge in order to remain competitive. But in fact these devaluations were ineffective. Many Kazakhstanis kept going through open borders to Russia to buy cheap products ranging from daily consumer products, to cars, which as a result made the government to negotiate with Russia over the possible restrictions.¹¹¹ These measures show that actually member states of the newly formed Eurasian Economic Union still act according to their national interests.

Of course with time if all member states continue to support the idea of the Eurasian Union, their connections will deepen, but the Union will be less likely to enlarge due to the changes in Russian role in the economies of the post-Soviet states, because in terms of trade Russian importance also has declined. For instance, instead of Russia, the European Union and growing China have become the largest trading partners.

¹¹⁰ Uzbekistan: Karimov vystupil s kritikoy EAES I Tamozhennogo soyuza [Karimov criticized EAEU and Customs Union] (2016) KyrgyzToday. (available at <http://kyrgyztoday.kg/ru/?p=2790> accessed 2.06.2016)

¹¹¹ Shenkan, Nate (2015) Impact of the Economic Crisis in Russia on Central Asia. *Russian Analytical digest*. No. 165 (pp. 3-7)

According to the statistics given at the end of 2013, the leading trading partner of Kazakhstan is European Union with 32,8%, the second is China with 24,2%, whereas Russia in only 21,1%. The situation is similar to all Central Asian countries, moreover it can be said about the Eurasian Economic Union's member states as well (apart from Belarus where Russia is still the major trading partner with 49,6%).¹¹² Thus the increased level of involvement of other players in economics of post-Soviet states will if not distance, then at least inevitably complicate their accession of the EAEU.

2.6 Conclusion

Russia is highly interested in cooperation with the Central Asian States, and with Kazakhstan in particular as it is believed that Russia's superpower position depends on its success in this region. It has particular strategic interests, namely the preservation of stability in the region through military cooperation and functioning of the Russia-led CSTO, the control over the transportation of Kazakhstani oil to the world markets, protection of a big Russian diaspora living in Kazakhstan from any type of discrimination, and successful functioning of the Eurasian Economic Union. These strategic interests are binding Moscow with the region and enable successful application of its policy towards its former territories.

The Kazakh-Russian military cooperation remains strong and even tends to become more extensive. One of the reasons behind this close military cooperation between the two states is necessity in Russian assistance to fight possible threats that might come from the south, notably extremism in light of the islamization of the region,

¹¹² Popescu, Nicu, (2015) Eurasian Union Uncertainties. *PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo*. No. 385 (pp. 1-3)

smuggling, and drug trafficking. Moreover, this cooperation enables Kazakhstan to balance other powers in the region.

A common desire to build a strong Eurasian alliance also strengthens ties between the two states and makes them work jointly in order to reach this aim. Eurasian Economic Union is a new step towards the realization of this project that enables Kazakhstan to access huge market. This project is a little complicated, particularly due to the pressure from external factors such as Western sanctions against Russia and as well as extremely low oil prices which are of vital importance to the economies of both Russia and Kazakhstan. But states steadily follow their policies. However, the Central Asian ruling elite's attitude towards cooperation with Russia differs. To date, only Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan became members of the Eurasian Economic Union.

The governmental form of soft nationalistic policy of Kazakhization gradually replaces the so-called Soviet heritage from people's minds, restoring Kazakh culture and building distinct Kazakh national identity. Even though this policy is constrained by such factors as huge number of Russian-speaking population, it also gently distances Kazakhstan from Russian Federation.

Kazakhstani dependency on Russia in terms of transportation of Kazakhstani oil to world markets is still considerably high, but the republic attempts to diversify its pipelines which means that Russian presence declines in Kazakhstan. The President's personality plays pivotal role in foreign policy of Kazakhstan, and as long as he remains in power, ties with Russia will continue to be strong.

Chapter 3

KAZAKHSTANI FOREIGN POLICY ORIENTATIONS AND RUSSIAN FACTOR

3.1 Introduction

Kazakhstan under the leadership of Nursultan Nazarbayev has permanently followed a multi-vector foreign policy aiming at decreasing its dependency on Moscow while remaining close to it on the basis of strategic partnership. Moreover, apart from Russia, other great powers including China and the United States are also interested in the Central Asian region. As a result of their involvement the regional politics have begun to be identified with a new concept, namely the “New Great Game”. It is kind of reminiscence of the XIX century’s “Great Game” between the Russian Empire and Britain over the enlargement of their territories, which depicts a competition aiming at controlling the natural resources and gaining influence in such regional matters, as religious extremism, terrorism, and drug trafficking.¹¹³

The “Multi-vector” foreign policy of Kazakhstan refers to a political orientation which aims to develop interstate relations on a pragmatic basis, which resides on potential costs and benefits for the state. The primary factors motivating the relations with one or another include; self-interest and self-preservation. The Republic of Kazakhstan is not the only state that is after the dissolution of the Soviet Union coherently followed multi-vector foreign policy, but indeed it is the most persistent

¹¹³ Ziegler, Ch. (2014) Russia and great-power politics: Russia in Central Asia: The Dynamics of Great-Power Politics in a Volatile Region. *Asian Perspective* 38 (p.591)

and skillful in formulating it.¹¹⁴ Nazarbayev is often called “master of multi-vectored foreign policy” for his strategy of balancing between superpowers instead of blind reliance on Russia alone.¹¹⁵

As it is stated in the Kazakhstani Foreign Policy Concept for 2014 – 2020, the Republic will continue to: a) strengthen its relations with the Russian Federation according to the Treaty on Good-Neighborliness and Alliance in the XXI century; b) deepen strategic partnership with People’s Republic of China; c) develop interstate relations with Central Asian republics; d) strengthen strategic partnership with the United States. Thus it is seen that first places at the list of priorities apart from neighboring Central Asian states for Astana there are three great powers. And Kazakhstan balances between them.¹¹⁶

Factors such as; Kazakhstan’s geopolitical position, the endowment of natural resources, demographic situation, and regime type have configured Kazakhstan political elite’s perceptions of presence of other great power’s interests in the region. Indeed, their foreign policy choices are determined by their location in the heart of Eurasia between two superpowers – Russia and China. The fact that the Kazakhstani economy largely relies on the export of natural resources which accounts for 70% of its export, and about 40% of its government revenue, but has a land-locked territory,

¹¹⁴ Hanks, R. (2009) ‘Multi-vector politics’ and Kazakhstan's emerging role as a geo-strategic player in Central Asia, *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies*, 11:3. (pp. 259 - 260)

¹¹⁵ Nixey, J. The Long Goodbye: Waning Russian Influence in the South Caucasus and Central Asia. *Chatham House Briefing Papers*. (p.10)

¹¹⁶ Foreign Policy Concept of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2014-2020 (available at <http://www.mfa.kz/index.php/en/foreign-policy/foreign-policy-concept-for-2014-2020-republic-of-kazakhstan> accessed 25.04.2016)

forced them to establish good relations with its neighbors with whom state shares long borders.¹¹⁷

The type of regime in Kazakhstan is called “neo-patrimonial” by nature and highly authoritarian. Since the independence of the Republic of Kazakhstan power has been concentrated in hands of its permanent leader Nursultan Nazarbayev, and the political elite of the republic are mainly his relatives, and a small group of oligarchs.¹¹⁸

Freedom House in its annual report describes Kazakhstani political system under president Nazarbayev “hypercentralized” and “designed to perpetuate the interests of the president, his family, and the ruling elite”. Scores of Kazakhstan in such indicators as national democratic governance, democracy, electoral process, civil society, independent media and corruption in 2014 range from 6.50 to 6.75 on a scale where 1 is best and 7 is worst. Despite the rhetoric of the building of democratization and various reforms, there is actually no commitment to it. The President himself appoints individuals to high positions to the government. The state lacks serious opposition what seems to produce serious political crisis after Nazarbayev’s retirement.¹¹⁹

Political leadership lacks domestic support and thus he decided to create “an image of state elite that was engaged internationally and deserving support domestically”.

¹¹⁷ Clarke, M. (2015) Kazakhstan’s Multi-vector Foreign Policy: Diminishing Returns in an Era of Great Power “Pivots”? *The ASAN Forum* Vol.4, No.2 (available at <http://www.theasanforum.org/kazakhstans-multi-vector-foreign-policy-diminishing-returns-in-an-era-of-great-power-pivots/> accessed 24.04.2016)

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Lillis, J. (2014) “Nations in Transit: Kazakhstan,” *Freedom House* (available at <https://freedomhouse.org/report/nations-transit/2014/kazakhstan#.VOKTD1O5-X0>. 25.04.2016)

There were a variety of international engagements such as meetings with world leaders, engaging in bilateral diplomacy, joining international organizations etc.¹²⁰

This part of the thesis argues that even though Kazakhstan follows a multi-vector foreign policy, it always acts in accordance with the interests of Russian Federation demonstrating dependency on it. In support of this argument the Kazakhstani official position regarding such initiatives by Russia, such as the economic integration projects in the post-Soviet states and regional conflicts will be analyzed.

3.2 Kazakhstani Political Elite on the Eurasian Economic Union

N. Nazarbayev was the leader who did not want the collapse of the Soviet Union and Kazakhstan was the only Republic that became independent after the Soviet Union officially collapsed. Nursultan Nazarbayev kept proposing the minimization of the split between Kazakhstan and Russia because he was sure that it might affect the strategic role of Kazakhstan which was and still is perceived as “a link between Central Asia and Russia”. Even after the creation of the CIS on the 8th of December, 1991, which sought to provide gradual steps towards the regulation of interdependent economies of newly independent states, Nazarbayev attempted to preserve the Soviet Union, delivering Gorbachev’s message about the importance of it. The meeting of the heads of post-Communist states was held by Nazarbayev who sought to sign economic agreement that will bind remaining republics. And only on the December, 16 Kazakhstan declared its Independence.¹²¹ Kazakh leader is still considered as a main inspirer of the Eurasian integration. As Vladimir Putin said during his visit to

¹²⁰ Schatz, E. (2006) Access by Accident: Legitimacy Claims and Democracy Promotion in Authoritarian Central Asia. *International Political Science Review*. Vol. 27, No. 3 (p.270)

¹²¹ Olcott, Martha Brill, (1992) Central Asia's Catapult To Independence. *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 71, Issue 3

the X International Youth Forum “Seliger” in 2014, it was “his idea – Eurasian Union – I have to admit it, it is not my invention. He invented it”.¹²²

In 1994, Nursultan Nazarbayev for the first time proposed the idea about the creation of a major integration project which would become a measure to overcome stupor in which post-Soviet States were involved soon after the creation of the CIS. He honestly claimed that the CIS was not effective enough to provide the real conditions for closer integration. There was a need to create a new organization with more clear guidelines. As Nazarbayev draw his ideas from works of famous Russian thinker; L. Gumilyov who described the unity of geographical, sociohistorical ties of people of Northern and Central parts of Eurasia. Nazarbayev’s approach to Eurasianism is based on the following principles:

- Economic pragmatism: to understand the cultural and civilization differences, he proposed to create integration on the basis of the economic pragmatism, and nothing more;
- Voluntary integration: Each state must understand that in highly globalized world there is no reason to remain limited only by its own borders;
- Political independence: Eurasian union is a collaboration of the states based on equality, nonintervention into the internal affairs of each other, respect to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of each party;
- Unanimity in decision making (confederalism): He proposed to create powerful supranational organ which shall operate on the consensus basis, taking into account interests of each member state. This power

¹²² Tengrinews (2014) Putin otvetil na vopros o Kazakhstane [Putin answered to the question about Kazakhstan]. (available at <https://tengrinews.kz/sng/putin-otvetil-na-vopros-o-kazahstane-260975/> accessed 26.04.2016)

no way implies transfer of state sovereignty. European Union shall serve as a successful example.

Although that time the representatives of the CIS member states didn't discuss this idea, the Kazakh leader gradually promoted his initiative.¹²³

There is no doubt that Nazarbayev believes in the positive potential outcomes of the Eurasian Economic Union. He keeps arguing that EAEU is created to benefit nations of her member states and moreover he claims that this organization is a necessity for Kazakhstan. Although there are opinions, from the West in particular, that the Eurasian Economic Union is an attempt to revive the Soviet Union, Nursultan Nazarbayev has kept claiming that there is nothing apart from economic integration behind this initiative:

We hear and see different interpretations and opinions of experts about the Eurasian Economic Union. I think it is necessary to examine and understand that it is not a political, but clearly economic cooperation, which is caused by the need of our state. We need it, we are neighbors. It is very important for Kazakhstan.¹²⁴

However as Nazarbayev claims if Kazakh rights as an independent state are violated and their sovereignty threatened, Kazakhstan would leave the Eurasian Economic Union.¹²⁵

Other representatives of the Kazakhstani political elite also support the idea of this economic integration. Some of them assert that EAEU should form a “new center of

¹²³ Nazarbayev, N. (2011) Yevraziisky soyuz: ot idei k istorii budushego” [Eurasian Union: from the idea to the history of the future] (available at <http://sk.kz/topblog/view/44> accessed 26/04/2016)

¹²⁴ Nazarbayev, N. Dlya Kazakhstana Yevraziyski Economichesky Soyuz – eto neobkhodimost' [For Kazakhstan the Eurasian Economic Union is a necessity]. (available at <https://strategy2050.kz/ru/news/5935> accessed 27.04.2016)

¹²⁵ Nazarbayev napomnil o prave Kazakhstana na vykhod iz eaes [Nazarbayev reminded abouth Kazakhstani right to leave eaes] (available at https://tengrinews.kz/kazakhstan_news/nazarbaev-napomnil-o-prave-kazakhstan-na-vyihod-iz-eaes-260719/ accessed 02.05.2016)

global innovations and transnational business”.¹²⁶ They totally support the idea of the President on the benefits this union will inevitably bring to each of its parties. He claims that among about 200 integration projects EAEU can prove to be the most effective, but in order to do it everyone’s efforts should be very effective.¹²⁷

Protagonists of the idea of creating the Eurasian Economic Union argued that such a union is necessary to satisfy the geopolitical needs of the Russian Federation. Thus Central Asian States are involved in a competition between Moscow and other powers in the region. Balancing between great powers, Kazakhstan also considers EAEU as an instrument to counterweight growing Chinese economic expansion. Three possible scenarios for the future of this organization have been suggested. The first is that the EAEU will be a successful integration project in the post-Soviet space with free trading zone between the states near and far. The second proposal is less positive. It argues that due to different aims and objectives of the member states the development of the Eurasian Economic Union goes slowly. With time the desire of states to be a part of EAEU will decrease and only Russian influence supports it from collapse for some period of time. The third scenario is similar to the second one, but additionally some leaders of member states might change; as a result the influence of China, EU and the US on the new political elite will decrease. Later the EAEU will collapse.¹²⁸

¹²⁶ Kazakhstanskaya Pravda. Kasim-Zhomart tokayev: EAES dolzhen formirovats’ a kak novyi tsentr globalnih innovatsii [Kassym-Zhomart Tokayev: EAEU should form a new center of global innovations](available at <http://www.kazpravda.kz/rubric/mir/kasim-zhomart-tokayev-eaes-dolzhen-formirovatsya-kak-novii-tsentri-globalnih-innov/> accessed 27.04.2016)

¹²⁷ K. Tokayev: Economicheskaya integratsiya vygodna vsem uchastnicam EAES (available at <http://www.inform.kz/rus/article/2661820> accessed 20.04.2016)

¹²⁸ Controversy of Kazakhstani experts: EAEU – Union of competitors or stagnation of the Union. By Andrey Chebotaryov (available at <http://presidentlibrary.kz/?p=2870&lang=ru> accessed 29.04.2016)

Other experts also expressed various opinions on the purposes of the Eurasian Economic Union, the formation of which supposed to happen during stable and peaceful time. They discussed its possible outcomes for Kazakhstan. Particularly, they linked the problems this organization faces nowadays to a number of factors. Due to the events on Ukraine and following anti-Russian sanctions nationalistic feelings of the member states have been strengthened. Moreover, EAEU might become a basis for rapprochement of the Central Asian states. For Kazakhstan this organization serves as an opportunity to transfer some Kazakh production to Europe.¹²⁹

Others believe that the EAEU Treaty will make Kazakhstan more attractive in terms of foreign investment as it happened as a result of membership in the Customs Union. It will give the Kazakhstani economy a new stimulus to develop and to become more competitive and will strengthen strategic partnership between member states.¹³⁰

A very pessimistic view on the future of the Eurasian Economic Union was presented by those who were against the creation of this organization mostly because of the differences of the sizes of the economics of member states. It will be very difficult to compete with Russia. He claims that Russian imperialistic politics that started in 2007-2008 have resulted in the current bad consequences and had been predicted long before the Treaty on the EAEU was signed. Kazakhstan already experienced this situation before when Tsarist Russia collected “Russian territories”, the Soviet

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Chto dast Kazakhstanu EAES? [What does EAEU give Kazakhstan?](<https://kapital.kz/economic/30381/chto-dast-kazahstanu-eaes.html> accessed on 29.04.2016)

Union collected republics, and now Putin's Russia brings together the "Russian world". He insists that the road to European values will be blocked by this integration with Russia.¹³¹

3.3 Kazakhstan Official Position on the Conflicts in the Region

It is a widely used shared opinion that Russia conducts its "imperialistic politics" towards post-Soviet states, which can be understood through the examination of the level of its involving involvement into comparatively in recent conflict such as; of Georgia and South Ossetia, separation of Ukraine, and the Azerbaijan-Armenia clash over Nagorno Karabakh. Thus the official reaction of the Kazakh political elite on aforementioned conflicts can perfectly demonstrate the level of Kazakhstani foreign policy dependence on Russian Federation.

3.3.1 Conflict In South Ossetia

On the 8th of August, 2008, worsened relations between the Russian Federation and Georgia moved evolved into an armed conflict. Georgian and Russian sources describe the situation from different angles, but the International Community agreed that "Georgia was the bull, not the matador". In other words Tbilisi started this war, but Moscow was the provocateur.

Georgia is very important point in terms of security as the ports and railroad systems of the South Caucasus are a strategic route into the heart of Eurasia. In order to prevent Georgia from being a member of NATO certain initiatives were taken including economic sanctions, but due to low because they had very limited effects, Moscow didn't find any other way to only destabilize Georgia, but provoking

¹³¹ Plyusy I minusy uchastia Kazakhstana v EAES [pluses and minuses of Kazakhstan participation in EAEU] (available at http://forbes.kz/finances/integration/plyusyi_i_minusyi_uchastiya_kazahstana_v_eaes accessed 30.04.2016)

military confrontation in Abkhazia and South Ossetia which used to be part of Georgia. but as a result of this military conflict, these two became partially recognized republics. Thus, the main objective of Russia in the provocative military game with Georgia was to prevent Georgia's integration into NATO by creating a frozen conflict along its borders.

Russia justified its interventions in the aforementioned republics claiming that its aim was to protect its citizens. Thus, Russia presented its actions as if they are humanitarian intervention in response to Georgia's "genocide of Armenians" and attacks on its peacekeepers. But the European Union report rejected such justification. Russian passports that were given to Ossetians prior to war were considered as illegal. Vast A vast majority of those people were not Russian nationals in terms of international law and "the mass conferral of Russian citizenship to Georgian nationals... constitutes an open challenge to Georgian sovereignty and interference in the internal affairs of Georgia".

During the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) member states expressed their support to Russia quite ambiguously, expressing their deep concern about the recent tensions in South Ossetia. They believed that the involved parties will successfully resolve the existing conflict peacefully through dialogue. They emphasized Russia's active role in a peaceful resolution of conflict., but in fact In the end they recognized neither South Ossetia nor Abkhazia.

President Nazarbayev expressed the official position of the Republic of Kazakhstan pointing out that the Western press did not mention comment at the very beginning of the conflict when the Georgian army suddenly attacked Tskhinvali and Russian

peacekeeping forces, what rather depicted Russia as the aggressor in this war. He strongly condemned these actions by Georgians and insists that such kind of conflicts should be resolved by a range of means apart from military ones. And although Kazakhstan seemed supportive of Russian military action in the region, Russian involvement in such conflict was not totally appreciated by Kazakhstan who considers the primary importance of inviolability of the principle of territorial integrity.

Nursultan Nazarbayev's speech Russian media was interpreted as support by Russian media to the newly elected Dmitry Medvedev when he said that he believed that all actions by Russians, who could neither ignore, or stop the bloodshed, were aimed at protecting the long-suffering residents of the city. He appreciated this difficult situation that occurred at the beginning of Medvedev's presidency and expressed hope he will find way to solve this situation.

But one it can read between the lines that the Kazakhstani President did not totally support Russia in this conflict, saying that he "believes" in such intention. Thus Kazakhstan is trying to act independently from Russia demonstrating its opposition to any secessionism.

3.3.2 Conflict in Ukraine and Annexation of Crimea

November, 2013 indicated the start to a massive crisis in Russo-Ukrainian relations.¹³² Ukrainians started demonstrations in support of euro integration, and Russia quickly annexed the Crimean peninsula, claiming that the reason to it was

¹³² Krizis na Ukraine [Ukraine crisis] *Interfax* (available at <http://www.interfax.ru/story/92> accessed 02.05.2016)

oppression of Russian speakers.¹³³ A Crimean referendum declared the independence of peninsula from Ukraine and as a result the request to join Russian Federation was sent to Moscow.¹³⁴ While official rhetoric insists that oppression of the rights of these people was the main cause of Russian concern and following recognition Crimea as a part of Russian Federation, scholars insist that behind Putin's decisions was the importance of Russian naval base in Sevastopol.¹³⁵ Russian involvement into these conflicts was condemned by international community, and as a result of these events the West imposed economic sanctions against Russian Federation.¹³⁶

Regarding the conflict in Ukraine Kazakhstan suggested that a peaceful method should be followed on the basis of democratic principles aiming at reconciling differences. Prior to this, a legitimate president should be elected, as well as a legitimate government and parliament should be appointed.¹³⁷ Kazakhstani official position on the situation in Crimea can be seen more clearly from the fact that they abstained during the UN vote. For Nazarbayev who always emphasized the importance of Kazakhstani sovereignty and its territorial integrity it is logical, especially in lights of Putin's claims about divided Russian people across the Russian border. As it was mentioned earlier, 23% of total Kazakhstani population consists of ethnic Russians who are mostly concentrated in the Northern regions of Kazakhstan.

¹³³ Godovschina vossoedineniya Rossii i Kryma [Anniversary of Russia-Crimea unification] (available at <http://ria.ru/spravka/20150316/1052210041.html> accessed 02.05.2016)

¹³⁴ Paul, A. (2015) Crimea one year after Russian annexation. *European Policy Centre*.

¹³⁵ Mearsheimer, J. (2014) Why the Ukraine Crisis Is the West's Fault: The Liberal Delusions That Provoked Putin, *Foreign Affairs* (available at www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/russia-fsu/2014-08-18/why-ukraine-crisis-west-s-fault 2.05.2016)

¹³⁶ Marten, K. (2015) Putin's Choices: Explaining Russian Foreign Policy and Intervention in Ukraine, *The Washington Quarterly*, 38:2 (pp. 190-198)

¹³⁷ See the speech by Nazarbayev available at https://tengrinews.kz/kazakhstan_news/nazarbaev-vyskazalsya-o-situatsii-na-ukraine-252486/ accessed 03.05.2016

Hence, one can infer that under similar circumstances, Kazakhstani sovereignty could be under threat.¹³⁸

For instance, in 2014, the Russian President during an International Youth forum; “Seliger” was asked about Russian potential actions regarding the rise of nationalism in Kazakhstan and about the possibility of the Ukrainian course of events in this republic in case if the power changes in Kazakhstan, as their President is seen as the main restraining factor of nationalists. Russian leader emphasized that the Kazakhstani President was not going to leave, and that moreover Kazakhstan remains an extremely important partner to Russia. For him Nazarbaev is probably the wisest politician in the post-Soviet territory, who “has performed a unique feat” by creating a state on a territory where there has never been a state. However this claim was considered as a hidden threat to Kazakhstani sovereignty.¹³⁹ Opinions regarding this event divided. According to some Kazakhstani experts, Russian President didn’t intend to insult his Kazakhstani colleague. In contrast, he just repeated official Kazakhstani ideology that Kazakh modern statehood is associated with the name of Nazarbayev who is truly one of the wisest politicians on the post-Soviet territory. The most important point here was question itself, rather than the answer. It meant that in case if current leader, who is seen as guarantor of stability and restraining factor for growing nationalism, leaves, then Kazakhstan might face the same problem as Ukraine. These statements were said along with other claims by some prominent Russian politician and Internet activists appealing to annex Kazakhstani north parts and make Central Asia a colony of Russia. All these things were seen as kind of

¹³⁸ Trenin, D. (2014) The Ukraine crisis and the resumption of great power rivalry. *Carnegie Moscow Center*. (p. 18)

¹³⁹ Tengrinews (2014) Putin otvetil na vopros o Kazahstane [Putin answered to the question about Kazakhstan]. (available at <https://tengrinews.kz/sng/putin-otvetil-na-vopros-o-kazahstane-260975/> 26.04.2016)

warning by Russian Federation to Kazakhstani leadership. But while the current political elite have absolute power in the Republic, there are no possibilities to face serious changes in Kazakhstani-Russian relations. The serious risks might start when new people will come to power in Kazakhstan. And in case if this new elite will not consider Russia too seriously Ukrainian-like scenario cannot be excluded from options for Kazakhstan.¹⁴⁰ Indeed, when such things happen it is demonstrates how fragile the relations are, especially in light of the events in Ukraine and Georgia.

The Kazakhstani leadership immediately declared that in 2015 Kazakhstan will celebrate the 550th anniversary of the first Kazakh state which was established in 1465 when brothers Zhanibek and Kerey founded the Kazakh khanate:

Kazakh statehood dates back to those times. Perhaps it wasn't contemporary type of state with current boundaries and international recognition, but we can say the same about all countries of that period of time.¹⁴¹

Kazakhstani official position almost always is supportive of Russia. President Nazarbayev even insisted on lifting Western economic sanctions from Russia. He called these sanctions “ineffective” because Russia is a strong state enough to survive against its pressure. The President of Kazakhstan suggested that politics should not be a barrier for economic relations and those conflicts should be resolved by diplomatic means.¹⁴² It might seem that this action is dictated by the dependency

¹⁴⁰ Kalikulov, Dinmukhamed. (2014) V Kazakhstane ozadacheny slovami Putina o russkom mire [Kazakhstan is concerned with Putin's claims about Russian world] *BBC Russian*. (available at http://www.bbc.com/russian/international/2014/09/140901_kazakhstan_putin accessed 06.06.2016)

¹⁴¹ Kazakhskoy gosudarstvennosti v 2015 godu ispolnitsa 550 let – Nazarbayev [in 2015 the Kazakh statehood will become 550 years] *Tengry News*, October, 2015 (available at https://tengrinews.kz/kazakhstan_news/kazahskoy-gosudarstvennosti-2015-godu-ispolnitsya-550-let-263876/ accessed 04.05.2016)

¹⁴² Nazarbayev prizval otkazatsa ot sanctsyi v otnoshenii Rossii [] *Tengry News*, October, 2015 (available at https://tengrinews.kz/kazakhstan_news/nazarbaev-prizval-es-otkazatsya-sanktsiy-otnoshenii-rossii-282096/ accessed 4.05.2016)

of Kazakhstani foreign policy on Russia, but it is rather the result of Kazakh discontent with the negative effect it has on the Kazakhstani economy.

It is important to note that Russian nationalists used to express hope that both Ukraine and North Kazakhstan will eventually be integrated into Russia.¹⁴³

... Russian cities which currently are abroad in Kazakhstan attract us. Starting from Uralsk, the whole continuous chain of Russian cities to the very Ust-Kamenogorsk have to become a part of Russia.¹⁴⁴

This action didn't go unnoticed and soon after Kazakh Ministry of Foreign Affairs demanded explanations from Russian Federation sending a note of protest.¹⁴⁵ The Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs immediately commented on this proposal saying that any parallels between Crimea and Kazakhstan are highly irrelevant. According to them the Crimean people were desperate and demanded Russian statehood in order to save their nations, whereas all nations are living peacefully under the leadership of Kazakh decision makers.¹⁴⁶ In this claim the same implication can be read as if Kazakhstan will continue its friendly politics towards all its nations, it will never face a Crimean scenario.

¹⁴³ Laruelle, M. (2015) Kazakhstan's Posture in the Eurasian Union: In Search of Serene Sovereignty. *Russian Analytical Digest* No. 165 (p. 8)

¹⁴⁴ See the essay by Eduard Limonov available at http://rusplt.ru/views_140.html

¹⁴⁵ MID RK gotovit noty Rossii posle 'predlozheniya' Limonova o zakhvate severa Kazakhstana. [MFA RK prepares a note to Russia regarding Limonov's "proposal" to invade North of Kazakhstan] *Tengri News*. (available at https://tengrinews.kz/kazakhstan_news/mid-rk-gotovit-notu-rossii-predlozheniya-limonova-zahvate-250762/ accessed 3.05.2016)

¹⁴⁶ Lyubyie paralleli mezhdru Krymom I Kazakhstanom neumestny – MID Rossii [any parallels between Crimea and Kazakhstan are irrelevant]. *Tengri News*, April, 2014 (available at <https://tengrinews.kz/russia/lyubyie-paralleli-krymom-kazahstanom-neumestnyi-mid-rossii-254333/> accessed 3.05.2016)

3.3.3 Conflict in Nagorno Karabakh

Azeri-Armenian conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh is the longest and bloodiest conflict among post-Soviet states.¹⁴⁷

Perhaps some external powers experienced high level of interest in this conflict including Russia. The relations between Moscow and Yerevan according to the evaluation of Armenian Foreign Minister Edward Nalbandian are “not just friendly” but can serve as a perfect example of bilateral relations in all of the Post-Soviet territory. Russia is the major investor in Armenia as well as a very important market for Armenian goods.¹⁴⁸ Even membership into the Eurasian Economic Union with unclear consequences for Yerevan almost did not face any opposition. On the contrary Armenians planned to sign an EAEU founding Treaty in Astana, in order to get a more privileged position equal to that of Russia, Kazakhstan and Belarus, although it was unsuccessful.¹⁴⁹

Russia is highly interested in the Karabakh conflict as a tool. Besides using gas prices as leverage against Armenia, Russia also seeks to maintain control over the Caucasus region through providing military support to both Armenia and Azerbaijan. Without extensive Russian support Armenia will not bare expenses and will definitely lose Nagorno-Karabakh.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁷ Starovoitova, G. (1999) Natsional'noie samoopredelenie [National self-determination] *SPb*

¹⁴⁸ Russia, Armenia show exemplary cooperation model. (2010) *Russian Financial Control Monitor*. (available at <http://search.proquest.com/docview/839581981?pq-origsite=summon> accessed 09.05.2016)

¹⁴⁹ Grigorian, A. (2015) Armenia's Membership in the Eurasian Economic Union: An Economic Challenge and Possible Consequences for Regional Security. *The Polish Quarterly of International Affairs*, no. 4 (pp.7 - 12)

¹⁵⁰ Blank, S. (2013) “Russia Pressures Armenia to Join Customs Union,” *The Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst*, vol. 15, no. 16, (available at <http://www.cacianalyst.org/publications/analytical-articles/item/12793-russia-pressures-armenia-to-join-customs-union.html> accessed 10.05.2016)

Kazakhstan as a chair state of the EAEU rescheduled a planned meeting in Yerevan from 7-8 of April to 13th. This action was considered as an intention to demonstrate that Kazakhstan supported neither Russia and Armenia, nor Azerbaijan in the conflict. Moreover, they refused to appoint Armenian representative as CSTO Secretary General in order to remain in good relations with Turkey. All these events clearly show that in fact Armenia does not have much common interests with both EAEU and CSTO.¹⁵¹

In this respect the Kazakhstani official attitude towards Russian interest in this conflict will indicate the high level of dependence in case of support of Russian Federation, because Kazakhstan is tied to Azerbaijan on the basis of common heritage and belonging to one group of Turkic-speaking states.¹⁵² So what is the reason behind Kazakhstani official proclamations regarding the Nagorno-Karabakh issue?

Before Armenia joined the Eurasian Economic Union, the question about the borders of this Republic was raised by the Kazakhstani leader. He insisted that Armenia should become a member of the EAEU in its internationally recognized borders which means without occupied Nagorno-Karabakh.¹⁵³ Was this step by Kazakhstan an act of support to its brotherly nation Azerbaijan, or desire to emphasize the importance of territorial integrity of the sovereign state? Armenian political scientist Sergey Minasyan claims that none of them. The real cause of it according to him was the desire of Astana to get more beneficial conditions in the EAEU. Kazakhstan uses

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Kazakhstan – Azerbaijan relations. *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan* (available at <http://mfa.kz/index.php/en/foreign-policy/kazakhstan-s-relations/kazakhstan-cis-cooperation/16-materials-english/2123-kazakhstan-azerbaijan-relations> accessed 17.05.2016)

¹⁵³ Armenia – EAES: finishnaya pryamaya [Armenia – EAEU: homestraight] (2014) (available at <http://ria.ru/analytics/20141008/1027417374.html> accessed 12.05.2016)

Armenian membership in this organization as leverage.¹⁵⁴ However, apart from mentioned motives, Kazakhstan simply seeks to protect Eurasian Economic Union from potential problems in trade with those involved in a conflict.

Kazakhstan's stand regarding this issue is totally defined by its self-interests rather than total dependence on Russia's will. Being a master of multi-vector foreign policy, Nursultan Nazarbayev even proposed Turkey to become a member of Customs Union in order to stop talks about possible revival of the Soviet Union.¹⁵⁵ Strategic partnership with Turkey signed in 2009, and reluctance to alienate it obviously is a major reason behind aforementioned acts by Kazakhstan, namely the postponed accession of Armenia to Eurasian Economic Union due to the uncertainty with the Armenian borders, refusal of Armenian leader from the position of Secretary General of the CSTO, and postponement of the meeting in Yerevan after the events in Nagorno-Karabakh.¹⁵⁶ Yerevan was shocked by this attitude of its allies from Eurasian Economic Union, claiming that such actions undermine the credibility of this organization and isolate Armenia politically.¹⁵⁷

Kazakhstan, as it happened in 90s when the last military clash occurred, can become a powerful figure to facilitate peaceful solution to this conflict. Today, as well as in

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Bayaliyev, A. (2014) The Turkic Council: Will the Turks Finally Unite? *The CACI Analyst*. (available at <http://www.cacianalyst.org/publications/analytical-articles/item/12916-the-turkic-council-will-the-turks-finally-unite?.html> accessed 17.05.2016)

¹⁵⁶ Kazakhstan – Turkey relations. *Ministry of Foreign relations of Kazakhstan*. (available at <http://mfa.kz/index.php/en/foreign-policy/kazakhstan-s-relations/kazakhstan-countries-of-europe-cooperation/16-materials-english/4727-kazakhstan-turkey-relations> accessed 17.05.2016)

¹⁵⁷ Kazakhstan I Belarus' demonstrativno otvernulis ot Yerevana [Kazakhstan and Belarus demonstratively turned their backs on Yerevan]. *Kavkaz Plus*. (available at <http://www.kavkazplus.com/news.php?id=5152#.Vz4WEDWLTIU> 19.05.2016)

90s, Nursultan Nazarbayev has good relations with both parties of the conflict.¹⁵⁸ As a creator of the idea of Eurasian integration on the post-Soviet territory Nazarbayev realizes all risks and potential problems that might occur if this conflict won't be regulated as soon as possible, because Armenia is the member of both Eurasian Economic Union and CSTO and the lack of support to it can affect these organizations negatively and undermine their credibility. But the support they lack is inappropriate in current situation because again it would harm integration organizations. To regulate this conflict and keep friendly relations with all influential actors interested in it is of vital importance.

In conclusion, the official rhetoric of the Kazakhstani leadership keeps emphasizing the importance of Moscow as the “partner number one” while creating different ways to diversify its options economically and politically. Astana consistently follows its multi-vector politics led by its self-interest. Due to some obvious reasons it is still quite dependent on Russia, but this dependence is first of all profitable for Kazakhstan, because Moscow indeed is and most probably will be extremely important regional power in the future. Moreover, the fact that Kazakhstan shares border with other very important power in the region – China – makes its relations with Russia even more significant, because it enables Astana to balance between them without total reliance on only one of them. Though in the Foreign Policy Concept of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2014 – 2020 the partnership with Moscow is not labeled as strategic, their relations are of such nature. Kazakhstan and Russia historically have close relations, interdependence and conflicts. According to the aforementioned document such close relations will continue to flourish in all

¹⁵⁸ Smailova, D. (2016) Chetvertyie sutki v Karabahe idut krovoprolitnye boi – reaktsiya Kazakhstana. [4 days of bloody conflict in Karabakh – Kazakhstani reaction] (available at <http://www.ktk.kz/ru/news/video/2016/04/04/68269/> accessed 19.05.2016)

spheres, since Kazakhstan seeks to promote its national interests based on the principles of pragmatism and friendly relations with such significant player in the region as Russia.¹⁵⁹

Kazakhstani-Russian relations can also be evaluated through Kazakh foreign policy preferences towards the issues in which Russia was involved, for instance Ukrainian crisis. Kazakhstani leader refused to take side of any party of this conflict, but claimed that economic sanctions imposed on Russia will not bring any positive result.¹⁶⁰ Nazarbayev's position is clear and dictated by rational self-interest, because serious changes in Russian leadership will inevitably affect Kazakhstan, and Kazakhstani political leadership in particular.

¹⁵⁹ Foreign Policy Concept of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2014-2020 (available at <http://www.mfa.kz/index.php/en/foreign-policy/foreign-policy-concept-for-2014-2020-republic-of-kazakhstan> accessed 14.06.2016)

¹⁶⁰ See Nazarbayev's speech during the press-conference in Astana with the French head of state Francois Hollande in 2014 (available <http://www.ktk.kz/ru/news/video/2014/12/05/55597> accessed 14.06.2016)

Chapter 4

CONCLUSION

This thesis argued that even after its Independence, the Kazakhstani ruling elite is being consistent with the most important strategic interests of Russia in the region. And even the Kazakhstani nationalistic project of Kazakhization that was aimed at reviving and promoting Kazakhstani culture was conducted in such a means as not to harm the Russian minority population which demonstrates Astana's high level of dependency on Moscow. In order to test these hypotheses, Russian strategic objectives have been examined and analyzed, notably in the stable Central Asian region and the CSTO, control over the Kazakh oil transportation, support to Russian diaspora living in the region, and the promotion of Russian culture and language, economic integration initiatives; Kazakhstani official reactions to Russia-led conflicts in post-Communist territories, as well as the issue of the Eurasian Economic Union.

Kazakhstan still remains culturally close to Russia and it seems that the current leadership is satisfied with the Russian minority living in state. It coherently follows chosen way, notably to serve as a link between Europe and Asia, intentionally supporting the idea of polilinguality, which both gives the Russian language an important status, as well as provides opportunities to open new horizons.

Through strategic cooperation with Kazakhstan, Russia spreads its influence to the entire Central Asian region; especially on those that it does not have direct access. Russian assistance in the military sphere is still very important for Kazakhstan as it provides extensive support in fighting major problems in the region. Kazakhstan does not have such developed defense technologies, thus it is in Kazakhstan's best interest to have Russian defense system to cover the territory of the republic. Both States have clear mutual interest in this cooperation.

As a result of this work, this thesis concludes that Russian-Kazakhstan relations can be characterized as a cautious friendship and deep strategic partnership, rather than total dependence by Kazakhstan on Russia. Both leaders clearly see the need of one another and all the reasons why this alliance is of vital importance in order to survive and preserve the current leadership. However, their interests clash, both act rationally, for instance when Kazakhstan did not back Russia in the United Nations regarding the Crimean Referendum.

Nation building project of Kazakhization indeed was designed in a way to not harm Kazakh-Russian strategic partnership. Instead it even facilitates cooperation between the two states.

In contemporary reality it is possible to argue that there is a strong interdependence between the two states. Both Russia and Kazakhstan are involved in common ambitious projects which are intimately connected to the idea of Eurasianism. Though it seems that their perceptions on this idea differ, thus, they follow different objectives that are dictated by self interest. Moreover, their common project will take a longer period of time to achieve due to growing pressures. As a result of these

pressures discontent grows amongst the population in both states. Growing nationalism in Kazakhstan, doubtful achievements of the Eurasian Economic Union, decreased standards of living in both states and different external threats makes the situation highly unpredictable.

Nonetheless this union is less likely to become subject to change as long as the current leadership keeps its positions. In both states the leaders' personalities play considerable role, and their ratings are quite stable as both leaders are very popular and supported. According to a survey conducted by Levada centre, about 84% of recipients expressed high level of trust in Vladimir Putin, and more than 75% even feel sympathy for him.¹⁶¹ The Kazakh leader won with 97,7% of votes during the last elections.¹⁶² There might probably be no considerable changes in these interdependent relations between the states as well, unless the power in Kazakhstan changes and a new leadership with different views will come to the office. In case this happens, Kazakh nationalists will not face any barriers, because Russian influence in the economy of Kazakhstan is eroding despite the close integration in the framework of EAEU. In order to give impulse to the economy, Astana will develop a closer economic cooperation with China. More probably Kazakhstan will distance itself from Russia, which in respond might cause a number of attempts by Moscow to destabilize the Republic and even maybe annex its northern parts. So the current foreign multi-vector policy of Kazakhstan is very competent because it enables the state to balance between all powers and preserve in its friendly relations with them, while choosing the most favorable conditions for themselves.

¹⁶¹ Vladimir PUTIN: otnosheniye I doveriye [Vladimir Putin: attitude and trust], *Levada Center* (2016) (available at <http://www.levada.ru/2016/03/21/vladimir-putin-otnoshenie-i-doverie-2/> accessed 16.06.2016)

¹⁶² CIK nazval Nazarbayeva pobeditelem vyborov [Central Electoral Commission called Nazarbayev a winner of elections] *Lenta Ru* (available at <https://lenta.ru/news/2015/04/27/results/> accessed 16.06.2016)

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