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### KAZAKHSTAN'S FOREIGN POLICY AND INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION (1991-2019)

**Abstract.** This paper examines the role of international recognition in shaping the political system of Kazakhstan from its independence in 1991 up to 2019. It highlights Kazakhstan's active participation in international organizations such as the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), as well as its engagement in regional frameworks including the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), and the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU). The study further analyzes how, under the leadership of Nursultan Nazarbayev, Kazakhstan pursued a pragmatic and multi-vector foreign policy, balancing its relations with major global powers such as Russia, China, the United States, and the European Union. By adopting this approach, Kazakhstan sought to safeguard its sovereignty, attract foreign investment, and enhance its global legitimacy.

The paper underscores that the period between 1991 and 2019 holds particular significance because Kazakhstan underwent dramatic changes both domestically and internationally. The most notable transformation was the transfer of power in 2019, which marked the end of the long-standing presidential rule of Nazarbayev. This transition not only reshaped Kazakhstan's internal political landscape but also influenced the direction and priorities of its foreign policy. The change in leadership created a new environment in which public consent for change and expectations for the future became increasingly visible, reflecting the evolving aspirations of Kazakh society.

Against this backdrop, the paper investigates how the 2019 transition affected Kazakhstan's foreign policy orientations, its pursuit of international

recognition, and the consolidation of domestic legitimacy. Through this analysis, the paper contributes to a deeper understanding of the interplay between recognition, diplomacy, and political transformation, showing how Kazakhstan's international engagements and domestic political developments between 1991 and 2019 have been mutually reinforcing in shaping the country's path toward stability and legitimacy.

**Keywords:** *Kazakhstan, legitimacy, recognitions, foreign policy, International Institutions and regional organizations*

## Читра Раджора

### ҚАЗАҚСТАННЫҢ СЫРТҚЫ САЯСАТЫ ЖӘНЕ ХАЛЫҚАРАЛЫҚ МОЙЫНДАЛУЫ (1991–2019)

**Аңдатпа.** Бұл мақалада 1991 жылы тәуелсіздік алған сәттен бастап 2019 жылға дейінгі кезеңде Қазақстанның саяси жүйесінің қалыптасуындағы халықаралық мойындаудың рөлі қарастырылады. Онда Қазақстанның Біріккен Ұлттар Ұйымы (БҰҰ) мен Еуропадағы қауіпсіздік және ынтымақтастық ұйымы (ЕҚЫҰ) сияқты халықаралық ұйымдарға белсенді қатысуы, сондай-ақ Тәуелсіз Мемлекеттер Достастығы (ТМД), Шанхай ынтымақтастық ұйымы (ШЫҰ) және Еуразиялық экономикалық одақ (ЕАЭО) секілді өңірлік бірлестіктерге тартылуы талданады. Зерттеуде Нұрсұлтан Назарбаевтың басшылығымен Қазақстанның прагматикалық және көпвекторлы сыртқы саясат ұстанып, Ресей, Қытай, АҚШ және Еуропалық одақ сияқты ірі державалармен қатынастарда тепе-теңдікті сақтауға ұмтылғаны көрсетіледі. Мұндай тәсіл Қазақстанға өз егемендігін қорғауға, шетелдік инвестицияларды тартуға және халықаралық легитимділігін нығайтуға мүмкіндік берді.

Мақалада 1991–2019 жылдар аралығы ерекше маңызға ие екені атап өтіледі, себебі бұл кезеңде Қазақстан ішкі және сыртқы саясатта ауқымды өзгерістерді бастан кешірді. Ең елеулі өзгеріс 2019 жылғы билік транзиті болды — бұл оқиға Назарбаевтың ұзақмерзімді президенттік билігінің аяқталуын білдірді. Бұл ауысым Қазақстанның ішкі саяси ландшафтына ғана емес, оның сыртқы саясатының бағыты мен басымдықтарына да ықпал етті. Биліктің ауысуы қоғамның өзгеріске деген сұранысы мен болашаққа деген үмітін айқын көрсетті, бұл қазақстандық қоғамның өзгеріп келе жатқан ұмтылыстарын бейнеледі.

Осы тұрғыда мақалада 2019 жылғы саяси транзиттің Қазақстанның

сыртқы саяси бағдарларына, халықаралық мойындалуға ұмтылысына және ішкі легитимділікті нығайту үдерісіне қалай әсер еткені зерттеледі. Бұл зерттеу халықаралық мойындау, дипломатия және саяси трансформация арасындағы өзара байланыстарды тереңірек түсінуге ықпал етіп, 1991–2019 жылдары Қазақстанның халықаралық белсенділігі мен ішкі саяси үдерістері елдің тұрақтылық пен легитимділікке бағытталған жолын қалай айқындағанын көрсетеді.

**Түйін сөздер:** Қазақстан, легитимділік, мойындау, сыртқы саясат, халықаралық институттар мен өңірлік ұйымдар.

## Читра Раджора

### ВНЕШНЯЯ ПОЛИТИКА КАЗАХСТАНА И МЕЖДУНАРОДНОЕ ПРИЗНАНИЕ, 1991-2019 ГОДЫ

**Аннотация.** В данной статье рассматривается роль международного признания в формировании политической системы Казахстана с момента обретения независимости в 1991 году до 2019 года. Особое внимание уделяется активному участию Казахстана в международных организациях, таких как Организация Объединённых Наций (ООН) и Организация по безопасности и сотрудничеству в Европе (ОБСЕ), а также его вовлечённости в региональные объединения, включая Содружество Независимых Государств (СНГ), Шанхайскую организацию сотрудничества (ШОС) и Евразийский экономический союз (ЕАЭС). В работе анализируется, как при руководстве Нурсултана Назарбаева Казахстан проводил прагматичную и многовекторную внешнюю политику, выстраивая баланс в отношениях с ведущими мировыми державами — Россией, Китаем, США и Европейским союзом. Такой подход позволял Казахстану укреплять суверенитет, привлекать иностранные инвестиции и повышать свою международную легитимность.

Отмечается, что период с 1991 по 2019 год имеет особое значение, поскольку именно в это время Казахстан пережил масштабные изменения как во внутренней, так и во внешней политике. Наиболее значимой трансформацией стала транзит власти в 2019 году, ознаменовавшая завершение длительного президентского правления Назарбаева. Этот переход не только изменил внутренний политический ландшафт Казахстана, но и повлиял на направления и приоритеты его внешней политики. Смена руководства создала новые условия, в которых обще-

ственный запрос на преобразования и ожидания будущего стали всё более заметны, отражая эволюционирующие устремления казахстанского общества.

В этом контексте в статье анализируется, как политический транзит 2019 года отразился на внешнеполитических ориентирах Казахстана, его стремлении к международному признанию и консолидации внутренней легитимности. Проведённое исследование способствует более глубокому пониманию взаимосвязи между признанием, дипломатией и политической трансформацией, демонстрируя, как международная активность Казахстана и его внутренние политические процессы в 1991–2019 годах взаимно усиливали друг друга, определяя путь страны к стабильности и легитимности.

**Ключевые слова:** *Казахстан, легитимность, признание, внешняя политика, международные институты и региональные организации.*

## INTRODUCTION

Recognition is a process under which some facts are accepted and concluded with a specific legal status, such as state status, sovereignty over the newly acquired area, or global nationality impact. In view of this, a vital component of the declaratory theory for the recognition is establishing that objective criteria for statehood are met. The majority of the writers are of the view that recognition is declaratory. That means, «State may exist without being recognized, and if it does exist, in fact, then whether or not other states have formally recognized it, it has a right to be treated by them as a state» (Worster 2009). Nursultan Nazarbayev states, «Without international recognition and cross-border guarantees from the international community, any discourse relating to nation-building, sovereignty, economic reforms and social development would then remain an empty shell» (ibid.).

The state can politically exist de-facto even without having de jure recognition of other states and the international community. It does have the options to defend its integrity and independence, yet for a meaningful prosperity and in the interest of its citizens; it requires international recognition to be benefited by various arrangements under international agreements and laws. In a way it is inevitable to be recognised, for its very existence as it has serious consequences. (Schatz 2000). Erman and Bartelson have given an insightful critique regarding the theories related to recognition which comes under «declaration and constitutive» topics of geopolitics. While they do agree

with the central idea that recognition is a part of the necessity of statehood. An entity can be called a «state» internationally when it is acknowledged externally, irrespective of its assertion internally. International legitimacy is linked with domestic legitimacy because, in terms of legitimacy, all public attitude measures towards international institutions- trust, confidence, and support are relevant to an understanding of legitimacy (Tallberg 2017).

Schatz concludes that, «unlike other Central Asian countries, Kazakhstan has engaged intensively in the international sphere since the early 1990s, as demonstrated by the quantity and intensity of its diplomatic relations, its participation often proactive – in a large number of international bodies and organizations and its promotion of multi-nationalism and multi-confessional» (Schatz 2008, 271–4). Moreover, it has actively taken part in Commonwealth of the Independent States (CIS), Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEC), also in Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), apart from other regional organisation, due to which it's International standing has improved without having to come across much international criticism regarding internal affairs or reforms. However, Kazakhstan's international outreach has been beyond regional participation, especially after the economy started to perform very well. For instance, in 2010, it got invited for OSCE which stands for Organisation for Security & Cooperation chairmanship in Europe (Schatz 2008).

By setting examples of achieving faster economic development and then slowly taking care of political liberal reforms, the leadership choose a political system with strong economic foundation first, then stability based democratic values, as it's direction towards getting legitimacy and international recognition, where Nazarbayev built Institutions instead of individual positions, contrary to his regional peers (Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan). The establishment of Nur- Otan as a party of power in its initial years can be regarded as a movement towards strong institutions, where the party helps to resolve inter-institutional conflicts and displays institutional leadership to effectively implement legislations while enhancing the nation's' international legitimacy.

## **THE FOREIGN POLICY OF KAZAKHSTAN**

The foreign policy of any country is determined by the process of development in that particular country. The role of the internal condition is vital in making foreign policy. So, many authors agreed that the generalization of foreign policy is closely related to the national interest. Each nation

determines its national interest, and they attain the goal of foreign policy. Foreign policy remains functional in the context of national interest.

Similarly, national interest is the fundamental principle of foreign policy. On the basis of national interest, the goal of foreign policy can be enabled in three groups. First, the primary goal is a national interest, security and integrity, economic interest, and national power accumulation. Second, intermediate goal; achieve non-political cooperation, increase national interest and international interest in pressure groups. Long term goal is to plan to establish world peace and security in the international order (Rumer 1989).

The need for resources and know-how to diminish the ramifications of the disintegration of the Soviet Union, required serious participation of newly born as well as established regional players in the international economic arena.

After the disintegration of the Soviet Union the need for resources and know-how to diminish the ramifications, required serious participation of newly born as well as established regional players in the international economic arena. As a matter of fact, Kazakhstan's foreign partner in order of priority remains Russia; it is also reflected in the list of regional and national priorities of Kazakhstan, according to the presidential decree «On the concept of foreign policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan». The republic is strengthening allied and good-neighbouring relations, strategic partnership with Russia, based on «military-political, trade-economic, culture-humanitarian, agro-industrial, transit transport, energy, space and other areas of mutually beneficial interaction».

Also, the third-place has been given to the partnership with China. The priority areas of cooperation are energy, trade, investment, economic, transport, technology, culture and humanitarian. The US is also mentioned in the Foreign Policy Concept of the country. Kazakhstan intends to strengthen its expanded strategic partnership with the American state. In addition, it also lays importance on developing relations with the European Union. The concept refers to work on «liberalization of the visa regime with the prospect of a gradual transition to a visa-free regime for the citizens of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the European Union». So, Kazakhstan's priorities list is indefinite and implemented according to government decree (Rumer 1989).

Simultaneously, diplomatic and strategic foreign policy is needed to balance Russia and China's interests with relation to Kazakhstan to avoid any possible threats due to the superiority in terms of military and economic strengths supported by population size. As a consequence, the

enhancement of ties with the United States became a necessity after gaining independence. The main foreign policy objective behind such a relationship was to bypass the near unavoidable dependence both on Russia and China. The maintenance of «a multilateral and diverse military-political and economic balance ensuring the security and sovereignty of Kazakhstan» was termed by President Nazarbayev as a basis of foreign policy in 1992. Afterwards, it came to be known as the «multi-vector and balance» strategy. As a number of foreign and domestic experts observed, under the prevailing circumstances, such doctrine allowed avoiding many costs while finding a place for Kazakhstan in the global political space. Direct personal contacts with heads of states helped complete many tasks as were required as per its foreign policy (Rashid 1993).

Kazakhstan's foreign policy's second critical task was to help attract foreign investment to the country's economy. The leadership of Kazakhstan not only hoped that foreign investment would speed up the economy's recovery from the crisis and would contribute to its modernization, but also believed that the development of cooperation with leading foreign companies, which, as a rule, have close ties with their governments, «will strengthen the interest of the leading powers» in the independence of the country. In this regard, Kazakhstan's leadership began to pursue a course towards forming «special relations with Russia» designed to create favorable conditions for the formation of Kazakhstani statehood. This foreign policy has objectively limited the limits within which Kazakhstan could follow the proclaimed strategy of «multi-vector and balanced» (Lewis, 1992).

Today it can be seen that the multi-vector principle has fully justified itself, allowing Kazakhstan not only to defend its national interests effectively but also to become an independent and influential player in the international arena. Kazakhstan intends to strengthen further economic and political cooperation with Russia, China, the United States and Europe, the Far Eastern countries.

In general, the 1990s were the time for Kazakhstan's foreign policy to create the prerequisites and conditions for implementing the strategy of «multi-vector and balance» rather than its actual implementation. Having established itself as a state and has strengthened its economy, Kazakhstan has embarked on the path to becoming a pole of the emerging regional subsystem.

An equally important area of foreign policy is the policy aimed at developing and deepening the dialogue between civilizations and religions, carried out by the Kazakhstani leadership for several years. Kazakhstan in 2003 and

2006 held two congresses of leaders of the world and traditional beliefs, which brought together spiritual representatives of the world's significant confessions. President of the Republic of Kazakhstan N.A. Nazarbayev at the UN's 62nd session (September 2007) proposed to hold the 3rd Congress of religious leaders in 2009 under the auspices of the United Nations. On the initiative of the Kazakh side, in October 2008, Astana hosted a forum of foreign ministers of Muslim and Western countries «Common world: progress through diversity».

Kazakhstan is also concerned about its national security, although international and global security depend on the politics of superpower and various international organizations activities. The most important of these international organizations are United Nation and its major institutions- the Security Council, the General Assembly, the International Atomic Energy assembly, etc. apart from this, it has taken up the task of solving the problem of terrorism and extremism, International Anti-terrorism Coalition which is headed by the United States. Apart from all this, thus NATO and G-8 are also working to solve some other serious problems. Since the beginning, Kazakhstan has been cooperating with all these organizations, keeping in mind its national security, and has actively participated in all these organizations. Thus, in recent decades, Kazakhstan has been gradually raising the international level, and due to this, its global influence as a major superpower of the world is also visible (Rashid 1993).

Following various economic, cultural, trade and technical agreements and their timely expansion by Kazakhstan in 1995, unprecedented contributions to Kazakhstan's multifaceted development have been made. This collaboration of its large project reflects the power of discovering new areas. At the same time, Kazakhstan has identified essential factors to maintain national security and to fulfil its national interest. Since any nation's military power becomes the strategic tool of the nation, Kazakhstan needs to cooperate with Russia, America, China, and Eastern countries for the acquisition of modern weapons according to its security and peace.

The international economic situation and the country's internal system have also affected Kazakhstan's foreign policies. The following elements in the international economy have been the dominant in this context.

- position of world economy
- global economic environment and
- Investment and multinational companies

All these factors play an essential role in Kazakhstan's Foreign policy. If we talk about the status of Kazakhstan's position in the economy in the global context, Kazakhstan has transformed into a market -friendly, globalised,

open and liberal economy. Also, international investment and trade are changing according to the changing nature of the economy.

Kazakhstan's main trading partners in external trade are Russia and Italy. Thus, taking a look at the cooperation in the world economy with Kazakhstan, it is known that Kazakhstan has carved its place among the great powers of the world. Despite the adverse situations, Kazakhstan's foreign trade is significant in the world economy. Simultaneously, Kazakhstan has vast potential for export in traditional areas as well as modern areas. So, European countries account for the largest share of Kazakhstan's trade turnover with 44% with the European Union responsible for the vast majority of this (40%). Italy is the leading trading partner from the EU with 14% of total trade turnover.

**Table 1.** Top Five Export and Import Destinations

Top five destinations for Kazakhstan exports			Top five exporters to Kazakhstan		
Countries	Total exporters USD billion	Share in exports	Countries	Total imports USD billion	Share in imports
Italy	11.7	19%	Russia	12.4	38%
China	6.3	10%	China	5.4	17%
Netherlands	6.2	10%	Germany	1.6	5%
Russia	5.2	9%	Italy	1.5	5%
France	3.8	6%	USA	1.3	4%

*Source: Report on "Business outlook in Kazakhstan" by Deloitte CIS Center 2019.*

## KAZAKHSTAN'S BILATERAL RELATION

The foundation of Kazakhstan–Russia relations was laid with the signing of the Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance on May 25, 1992. This treaty emphasized that the two countries, «relying on historically established strong ties between the two states, build their friendly relations on the principles of mutual respect for state sovereignty, territorial integrity, and the inviolability of existing borders».

Kazakh–Russian relations have evolved in several stages: first, defining a new format of interaction after the collapse of the Soviet Union; second, searching for optimal forms of economic and political cooperation; third, expanding ties in trade, science, technology, and humanitarian fields; and

finally, consolidating a long-term strategic partnership. In recognition of this, both sides signed the Declaration of Eternal Friendship and Alliance Oriented Towards the 21st Century on July 6, 1998. Economic cooperation has remained at the core of bilateral relations. Both states have collaborated in energy, finance, transportation, and nuclear sectors. In June 2005, they agreed to establish an Investment Bank with an authorized capital of USD 1.5 billion, aimed at financing joint projects, especially within the EurAsEC framework. The bank reviewed more than 20 projects worth USD 2.5 billion, including a USD 600 million investment for the modernization of the Ekibastuz GRES-2 power station in northern Kazakhstan, addressing energy shortages in both Kazakhstan and Russian border regions. Further agreements covered gas processing at Karachaganak, expansion of the Caspian Pipeline Consortium, and increasing throughput of the Atyrau–Samara oil pipeline. Kazakhstan and Russia also established joint ventures in uranium extraction and nuclear reactor development. In the space sector, Kazakhstan utilized its Baikonur cosmodrome and, with Russian support, launched its first satellite, KazSat-1, in 2006, laying the foundation for a national space industry.

President Nazarbayev described bilateral relations as resting on «a high level of trust and strategic partnership», noting that «there are no political or economic problems between our countries that cannot be solved through constructive dialogue and mutual consideration of interests». These remarks were reaffirmed in 2007 summit talks in Moscow. Similarly, after assuming the presidency in 2019, Kassym-Jomart Tokayev chose Russia for his first official visit. He called ties with Russia «a model relationship» and vowed to ensure continuity of Nazarbayev’s policies. This gesture reinforced Moscow’s role as Kazakhstan’s closest partner in foreign affairs.

Institutionalized economic integration has further bound Kazakhstan and Russia. The creation of the Customs Union in 2010, involving Russia, Belarus, and Kazakhstan, paved the way for the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) established in 2015. While Kazakhstan has actively participated, it has also signaled limits to integration, rejecting proposals for joint citizenship, a common currency, or a supranational parliament. Nevertheless, bilateral trade continues to grow. Russian Trade Representative Alexander Yakovlev stated that the Kazakhstan–Russia Country Action Plan 2018–2020 aimed to boost trade volumes and expand cooperation.

Despite occasional differences over the scope of integration, both Astana and Moscow have prioritized stability, constructive dialogue, and mutual respect. As Kazakhstan navigates its post-Nazarbayev era, continuity in its «model relationship» with Russia remains central to its foreign policy.

## CHINA

Kazakhstan's cooperation with the People's Republic of China, formalized through diplomatic relations established in January 1992, has remained a priority area of Kazakhstan's foreign policy. Over the past three decades, the bilateral relationship has developed into a multifaceted partnership encompassing political, economic, energy, infrastructure, and security dimensions. China's strategic interest in Kazakhstan and Central Asia is driven by three primary considerations. First, China seeks to strengthen partnerships with Central Asian states, positioning them as part of its strategic hinterland. Second, China is motivated by the region's abundant hydrocarbon and mineral resources to secure long-term energy supplies and support its industrial development. Third, China sees significant investment opportunities in Central Asia's infrastructure and industrial projects. Collectively, these factors have intensified Beijing's engagement in Kazakhstan, creating a mutually beneficial but complex dynamic (Olcott 1995).

China's engagement with Kazakhstan is shaped by historical ties and the shared goal of regional stability. In the early post-Soviet period, China prioritized building political trust with Kazakhstan to secure its western borders and promote regional development. Key agreements, such as the Treaty of Good-Neighborliness and Friendly Cooperation signed in 2002 in Beijing, established the legal foundation for long-term bilateral cooperation. This treaty encompassed over 230 contracts across various sectors, providing a comprehensive framework for political, economic, and strategic collaboration.

### **Economic and Trade Relations**

The economic partnership focuses on multiple sectors, including energy, infrastructure, construction, and technology. The establishment of trade corridors and joint projects has been facilitated through multilateral platforms such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and the World Trade Organization (WTO). Kazakhstan has leveraged these frameworks to attract Chinese investment in strategic projects, particularly in the oil, gas, and energy sectors. The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), launched in 2013, has further strengthened Kazakhstan–China economic ties. The initiative aims to develop trade networks connecting Central Asia and Europe through

railways, highways, ports, and pipelines. Kazakhstan plays a critical role as a transit hub, linking China's Xinjiang province to the Caspian Sea via pipelines and overland corridors. These projects facilitate the export of Kazakh energy resources while enabling China to diversify its energy imports and expand infrastructure connectivity.

### **Infrastructure and Investment**

Beyond energy, China has invested heavily in Kazakhstan's infrastructure and industrial projects. Chinese funding supports the construction of roads, railways, ports, and industrial zones, enhancing Kazakhstan's logistical capacity and regional integration. Multilateral forums, such as the SCO Business Council and intergovernmental meetings, have provided platforms to coordinate these investments. Chinese engagement is also evident in agriculture, manufacturing, and high-tech sectors, reflecting a strategy of comprehensive economic partnership. However, these investments have occasionally provoked domestic concern. Anti-Chinese protests erupted in 2016 over the proposed sale of agricultural land and in 2019 following opposition to the construction of 55 Chinese factories. Citizens expressed apprehension about growing economic dependence on China, fearing that local employment opportunities and land ownership could be compromised. The Kazakh government responded by regulating projects and detaining protest leaders, demonstrating the tension between economic partnership and domestic political sensitivities.

### **Challenges and Future Prospects**

Despite the strong partnership, challenges remain. Kazakhstan must balance its deepening economic dependence on China with its sovereignty and domestic political concerns. Social unrest and public opposition to Chinese investment demonstrate the sensitivity of these issues. Additionally, regional instability in Afghanistan, interethnic tensions, and competition over Caspian hydrocarbon resources pose potential risks to the bilateral relationship. China's growing influence in Kazakhstan is also part of a broader strategic calculus, including balancing Russian influence, countering U.S. dominance, and ensuring secure energy supplies. Consequently, Kazakhstan pursues a cautious yet proactive strategy, integrating Chinese investment and political cooperation while maintaining multi-vector diplomacy with other global and regional powers (Olcott 1995). Kazakhstan–China relations are characterized by extensive cooperation, particularly in

energy, trade, infrastructure, and security, underpinned by mutual strategic interests. China's investment and economic engagement have transformed Kazakhstan's energy sector and infrastructure, while Kazakhstan provides China with critical access to Central Asian markets and resources. At the same time, Kazakhstan manages domestic sensitivities and maintains a balanced foreign policy, navigating its ties with Russia, the EU, and the United States.

Looking ahead, the bilateral relationship will likely expand through infrastructure projects under the Belt and Road Initiative, strategic energy partnerships, and enhanced multilateral cooperation within the SCO. Despite occasional domestic protests and regional instability, Kazakhstan–China relations remain a cornerstone of Kazakhstan's foreign policy, reflecting both countries' shared economic, political, and strategic interests in Central Asia (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China).

### **KAZAKHSTAN AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS: PATHS OF COOPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT**

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) was founded in 2001, evolving from the earlier Shanghai Five group, which consisted of Kazakhstan, China, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, and Tajikistan. Uzbekistan later became a member, followed by other countries. The SCO's primary goals are to maintain regional security and stability, combat terrorism, extremism, and separatism, and promote economic and humanitarian collaboration among its member states.

Kazakhstan has traditionally placed special emphasis on environmental and water resource issues, particularly regarding the Aral Sea and transboundary rivers like the Amu Darya, Syr Darya, and Irtysh. Through SCO, Kazakhstan seeks to balance national interests with regional cooperation on shared resources (Starr, 2005). Membership in SCO also allows Kazakhstan to address cross-border disputes and foster social, economic, and cultural integration, reducing reliance on military solutions for regional stability. President Nursultan Nazarbayev emphasized resolving historical boundary issues to ensure lasting peace for future generations (Abishev 2002). Energy cooperation is a growing focus within SCO. Kazakhstan proposed the creation of the SCO Energy Agency and Energy Club to facilitate information sharing, market operations, and energy security among member states, which collectively hold substantial oil and gas reserves (Tiffany 2010). Kazakhstan also uses SCO to expand trade, investment, and technological cooperation

in sectors such as banking, IT, telecommunications, and pharmaceuticals, strengthening its regional economic presence.

SCO summits, including the 2019 Qingdao meeting, emphasized joint counter-terrorism exercises, peacekeeping, and regional trade integration through projects like the Belt and Road Initiative (Awan 2018). Kazakhstan's participation in SCO reflects its multi-vector foreign policy, balancing Russian and Chinese influence while engaging with other regional partners. By leveraging SCO's platforms, Kazakhstan continues to play a proactive role in fostering stability, cooperation, and sustainable growth in the Central Asia region.

Europe, particularly the European Union (EU), is a key partner in Kazakhstan's foreign policy. Bilateral cooperation between Kazakhstan and EU countries has been developing across political, economic, trade, scientific, and technological fields. While these initiatives primarily focus on peaceful development, they increasingly intersect with military and security concerns. The EU's interest in Central Asia, including Kazakhstan, intensified after the 9/11 attacks in the United States and the subsequent war in Afghanistan (EEAS 2019). The EU's modern security framework operates on three levels: intra-European cooperation among member states, transatlantic relations through NATO and European security institutions, and regional collaboration with neighboring states, including Russia, Central Asia, and the South Caucasus. The EU's security priorities address civil wars, organized crime, drug trafficking, migration, and energy dependence on external suppliers, particularly from the Persian Gulf, Russia, and North Africa. These factors shape Kazakhstan's cooperation with the EU, as European capabilities can assist in regional stability and security, while Kazakhstan's strategic location facilitates EU access to Afghanistan through air corridors, military-technical support, and emergency transit (ibid).

Energy cooperation is another key pillar of Kazakhstan-EU relations. Kazakhstan's hydrocarbon resources offer the EU secure energy supply routes, contributing to its energy diversification and security objectives. Initiatives such as the INOGATE program integrate Kazakhstan into a broader European energy transport network, enhancing connectivity and protecting energy supplies for both the EU and Central Asia (Zardykhan 2004). In addition, Kazakhstan benefits from the EU's advanced expertise in border management, customs, and financial controls. Programs like CADAP (Central Asian Drug Action Program) and BOMCA (Border Management Program in Central Asia) strengthen regional law enforcement cooperation,

provide a shared information network, and improve the management of state borders (Radyuhin 2009). Such initiatives help Kazakhstan address transnational security threats, including drug trafficking and illegal migration, while supporting broader regional stability.

Despite these advantages, military-political cooperation between Kazakhstan and the EU remains relatively limited. This limitation is influenced by the EU's reliance on NATO, its historically unclear security vision in Central Asia, the influence of Russia and China on regional security structures, and internal disagreements among EU member states regarding a unified approach. Consequently, Kazakhstan's collaboration with the EU is often shaped by balancing European, Russian, and Chinese strategic interests (Russell 2019). Overall, Kazakhstan's engagement with the EU reflects a multidimensional approach, combining political, economic, energy, and security cooperation. By leveraging European expertise, infrastructure programs, and energy partnerships, Kazakhstan strengthens regional stability and integrates into international networks, while the EU gains a strategic partner in Central Asia for promoting peace, security, and sustainable development.

### **Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)**

The OSCE takes a comprehensive approach to security, aiming to integrate Eurasian security mechanisms to address global challenges and threats while promoting cooperation among NATO, CSTO, CICA, and SCO. In the early stages of Kazakhstan-OSCE relations, joint activities focused on practical information exchange, assisting Kazakhstan in implementing reforms during its transition to a market economy, strengthening regional security, and developing civil society. Since February 2003, under the Memorandum of Understanding with OSCE/ODIHR, Kazakhstan has undertaken projects to reform the office of the Commissioner for Human Rights, as well as its judicial and legal systems, reflecting the country's commitment to democratic modernization.

Kazakhstan has leveraged its historical experience of interethnic and interfaith harmony to act as a regional guarantor of long-term security. At the 2006 OSCE meeting on intercultural, interreligious, and interethnic tolerance, President Nazarbayev emphasized Kazakhstan's role as a bridge between the East and West, promoting dialogue among civilizations. This approach aligns with the OSCE's goal of creating a uniform dialogue platform connecting Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian spaces, particularly in response

to accelerated global changes. Kazakhstan's political modernization is closely linked to OSCE recommendations. During its 2010 chairmanship, Kazakhstan prioritized the organization's core principles, strengthened the ODIHR mandate, and focused on maintaining regional stability in Central Asia. The country also emphasized socio-economic development in Afghanistan, improved economic cooperation among Central Asian states, expanded transport and transit networks, and promoted the rational use of water and energy resources based on OSCE expertise (OSCE 2010).

The OSCE presidency highlighted Kazakhstan's commitment to equality among member states and sustainable regional development. Furthermore, the OSCE has promoted a comprehensive security approach in Eurasia, encouraging cooperation between international and regional organizations to combat terrorism. Kazakhstan's active engagement demonstrates the strategic relevance of the OSCE model for building a stable and coordinated security framework in the Asian region. By integrating European security experience with regional priorities, Kazakhstan contributes to creating a more predictable and secure environment while strengthening its diplomatic and multilateral profile.

## **CONCLUSION**

Kazakhstan, have achieved significant geostrategic and political stability through efforts such as enhancing economic cooperation and fostering socio-political interdependence. These measures have strengthened the Kazakhstan's international recognition and relations with global actors. Rapidly changing regional dynamics have accelerated the need for shared investment, transport, trade, communication, and economic policies. While Central Asia shows strong integration potential, unresolved geopolitical contradictions between major powers have hindered the development of fully integrated transport and communication networks across the region. Nevertheless, Kazakhstan is actively working to link its internal infrastructure with neighboring countries, aiming for mutually beneficial regional connectivity. Kazakhstan's political legitimacy and international recognition are closely tied to its economic performance, institutional development, and socio-political stability. International recognition reinforces Kazakhstan's balanced foreign policy, enhancing its authority and facilitating constructive relations with Russia, China, the USA, EU countries, and other global actors.

Kazakhstan's active participation in multilateral organizations,

including SCO, CSTO, and EURASEC, reflects its commitment to economic development, trade cooperation, and regional security. The country has also initiated the CICA process, gradually establishing a dialogue platform for Asian countries. ASEAN nations view Kazakhstan as a potential strategic partner due to its stable economic growth and balanced policies. Future cooperation in energy transport infrastructure could link Central Asia with Southeast Asia and China, promoting regional integration and economic consolidation. By leveraging its rich natural resources and strategic location, Kazakhstan successfully minimizes geopolitical rivalry, fosters mutually beneficial international partnerships, and contributes to regional stability. Through these efforts, Kazakhstan demonstrates a pragmatic foreign policy that balances economic, political, and security interests while positioning itself as a stable and reliable partner in Central Asia and beyond.

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