



**KAZAKHSTAN'S GEOPOLICY LOCATION AND
THE INFLUENCE OF NEIGHBORHOOD COUNTRIES**

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ABSTRACT

This article analyzes the geopolitical position of Kazakhstan in Central Asia and its relations and influence with major powers and neighboring countries. It also discusses the importance of Kazakhstan's multi-vector policy and its contribution to the development of the state. The article comprehensively examines and systematically analyzes the geopolitical position of Kazakhstan in world politics, its multi-vector policy, and the position of neighboring countries towards Kazakhstan and their cooperation.

INTRODUCTION

In the context of the changing geopolitical balance of power in the Eurasian space in the 21st century, Kazakhstan stands out as one of the most important strategic states in Central Asia. Territorially vast, rich in natural resources and located at the intersection of transcontinental transport corridors, this state has become a region where the interests of global and regional actors intersect.

Kazakhstan's foreign policy is multi-vector in nature, it seeks to balance cooperation with several major states at the same time. Therefore, its relations with neighboring states are important not only in economic terms, but also in security, energy and geopolitical terms.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Kazakhstan as a region of global interests. After the Central Asian states gained independence, the region became a point of intersection of global interests. Also, in Kazakhstan, the interests of hegemonic states converge. The strategies of the United States and China for 2019-2025 are also reflected in these processes. The US strategy is aimed at strengthening sovereignty, ensuring security, and developing democratic institutions in the region. For



example, in 2001-2021, the United States provided more than \$9 billion in assistance to the Central Asian states, of which \$6.8 billion was directed to the military and security sectors [1]. In this regard, the funds allocated to Kazakhstan constitute a relatively small but strategically important part of the total assistance to the region, that is, the share of this country is estimated at approximately 11%-17%. In addition, while China invests in Kazakhstan mainly based on strategic economic interests, Russia invests within the framework of a more integrated economic space.

Kazakhstan's security and the Russian factor. The main element of Kazakhstan's security system is cooperation within the CSTO. This organization was created to protect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of its member states [2]. It is clear from this that the CSTO performs a protective function, but in real political practice this system creates an asymmetric encryption algorithm. That is, although the members of the organization have equal rights, real decision-making and military resources are mainly concentrated in the hands of Russia. From this point of view, the CSTO is a collective security mechanism for Kazakhstan, and a mechanism of influence and control for Russia. Also, a “security dilemma” arises, that is, Kazakhstan approaches Russia to strengthen its security, and as a result of this rapprochement, its strategic independence decreases, and institutional dependence increases.

In the events of January 2022, the Kazakh government specifically sought assistance from the CSTO [3]. This event marked a new trend in Russia, where the CSTO has become an intervening force not only in external threats but also in internal political crises. Russia demonstrated its operational superiority by sending a rapid force. This also served as a signal to other Central Asian states. Russia also restored its status as a “security leader” in the region through this intervention. Kazakhstan is one of the countries with the largest energy resources in Central Asia, and its oil and gas reserves play an important role in the global energy system. At the same time, the export and transit of these resources largely depends on Russian infrastructure [4]. From this perspective, the energy issue is not a simple economic activity, but an area of strategic competition between geopolitical powers. This situation presents Kazakhstan as a state structurally rich in its own resources, but with limited ability to manage them independently. That is, although the resources exist, Kazakhstan remains vulnerable to external economic pressures because the infrastructure to export them to global markets is under the control of another state.

The geopolitical nature of Chinese investments in Kazakhstan. China is investing in Kazakhstan mainly within the framework of the “One Belt, One Road” initiative. This initiative is aimed at developing trade and transport corridors across Eurasia [5]. “One Belt, One Road” will transform Kazakhstan from a simple investment recipient country into a strategic transit center. This process will allow China to access European markets by land and strengthen



Kazakhstan as a geopolitical “corridor state”. As a result, the economic project is gradually becoming an instrument of geopolitical influence.

China is investing heavily in the development of railways, highways and logistics centers in Kazakhstan [6]. Infrastructure investments will integrate Kazakhstan into China’s Eurasian trade system. Through this process, China will not only receive economic benefits, but also strengthen geopolitical control over transport routes. As a result, Kazakhstan will form not an independent, but a connected node in the global trade system.

Chinese investment is deeply embedded in the Kazakh economy through loans, technology, and infrastructure. Chinese investment in Kazakhstan is not limited to infrastructure or energy, but also through financial institutions, credit policies, technology transfer, and educational cooperation. Chinese banks and state-owned companies finance large infrastructure projects in Kazakhstan, including railways, highways, logistics centers, and industrial zones [7]. This process creates a model of “soft power through infrastructure.” China increases its influence through economic dependence rather than overt political pressure. As a result, Kazakhstan is forced to take China’s interests into account in decision-making. This in turn strengthens institutional dependence in the long run.

In general, Chinese investment for Kazakhstan is, on the one hand, a means of economic modernization, infrastructure development, and expanding international transit opportunities, and, on the other hand, a factor that strengthens geopolitical dependence and, to some extent, limits strategic independence. Therefore, Kazakhstan's current geopolitical situation is considered a complex balance between economic opportunities and strategic constraints.

Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan: a new model of regional cooperation. Political relations between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan have intensified sharply since 2016. In 2017, regular meetings were established at the level of heads of state, agreements were signed approaching the level of strategic partnership and alliance. Long-term negotiations on border delimitation and water resources were concluded [8]. This process indicates that a new geopolitical paradigm is taking shape in Central Asia. Previously, the region was governed by external forces, but now internal “regional subjectivity” is gaining strength. Political rapprochement between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan is creating a model of “governing the region from within the region”. The most important aspect of this situation is that the two states are moving from competition to cooperation. This is a change in geopolitical identity. The two states are no longer just nation-states, but are beginning to present themselves as the main pillars of the “Central Asian subregion”. This leads to the formation of a regional identity. Such an identity strengthens the joint position in relation to external forces and increases the bargaining power.

The management of water and energy resources between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan is one of the most important strategic issues in Central Asia. The main water sources - the Amu Darya and Syr Darya basins - are vital for the agricultural, energy and industrial systems of the two



countries [9]. Water and energy resources are a key factor determining not only economic, but also geopolitical stability in the relations between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. This issue can be explained by the theory of “resource geopolitics”, that is, natural resources become a strategic tool that shapes cooperation or competition between states.

CONCLUSION

In general, Kazakhstan is emerging in today's international system not as a simple regional state, but as a complex space of geopolitical interests. Therefore, Kazakhstan's foreign and domestic policies need to move away from traditional balancing and move to the stage of active geopolitical management.

First, Kazakhstan should form a model of active influence management, not passive adaptation, in relations with neighboring countries.

Second, Kazakhstan, as a region of global interests, needs to reinterpret its strategic importance.

Third, the geopolitical nature of Chinese investments requires special attention. Projects within the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative create great economic opportunities for Kazakhstan, but they also bring with them the risks of indebtedness and strategic dependence. Therefore, it is important to link investments not only to infrastructure, but also to technological transfer and the development of local industry.

In general, if Kazakhstan can take multi-vector policy to a new level and turn it into an active geopolitical management strategy, it can become not only a regional leader, but also an important strategic player in Eurasia.

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