

Abstract

Title of Thesis: The Achievement of Sovereignty by a Former Soviet State:
Kazakhstan's International Policies to Diversify Its
Partnerships Beyond Russia

Brooke Elyse Lennox, Bachelor of Arts, 2020

Thesis directed by: Benjamin Paloff

What is required for a post-Soviet Eurasian country to establish effective sovereignty from historical Russian influence? How has the renovation of Kazakhstan's foreign policy expanded under the leadership and outward focus of President Nur Sultan Nazarbayev and the Kazakh government? This thesis argues that Kazakhstan, after independence, positioned itself in a place of power by using its ambitious foreign policy to bolster Kazakhstan's leadership in international organizations, advance domestic economic infrastructure, and internationalize its higher education system. This thesis establishes specific metrics for success based on the Kazakh governments intentions and goals to measure Kazakhstan's achievement in each of these areas. Beginning in the early 1990s Kazakhstan has actively participated in the international community through nuclear nonproliferation efforts, membership in the World Trade Organization, the United Nations Security Council and a variety of regional cooperative organizations. More recently, Kazakhstan has engaged in a strategic partnership with China that has created economic and transportation infrastructure within Kazakhstan that was greatly needed to increase efficiency. Lastly, Nazarbayev has profoundly restructured the previously Soviet higher education system in order to advance Kazakhstan's international academic competitiveness. Each of these sectors has advanced in accordance with Nazarbayev's declared goals and initiatives and together provide Kazakhstan greater independence from Russian influence.

The Achievement of Sovereignty by a Former Soviet State:
Kazakhstan's International Policies to Diversify its Partnerships beyond Russia

By

Brooke Elyse Lennox

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Thesis Committee:

Professor Benjamin Paloff
Doctor Anthony Marcum

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Discussion on Translations

This thesis used a variety of different official speeches from the Kazakh government. Some government speeches are unavailable in English, and therefore I have translated a few phrases and initiatives that are used in this thesis. The quotes that I have translated do not require romanization due to the ability to transliterate the Russian language. I have a professional and working understanding of the language due to four years of study in addition to four months of experience living in St Petersburg, Russia.

Chapter One: Introduction

I. Introduction and Background

The year 1991 marked a watershed in history when the Soviet Union disintegrated and all of its satellite states were thrust into sudden independence. The world watched as the largest modern empire crumbled. Russia had colonized and exploited Central Asia for their plethora of raw materials, but after the fall of the USSR, the international community was optimistic about the potential for the newly independent Central Asian states (Pipes, 1964; Pomfret & Anderson, 2001). There were hopes of economic partnerships, geopolitical collaboration, and liberal democracy, yet those dreams were quickly shattered due to Russia's continued assertion of dominance in the area.

All Central Asian states were "forced to become independent states" in the decision made by only a few select Soviet officials in late 1991 (*Sovereignty After Empire: Comparing the Middle East and Central Asia*). After this decision, there was an overall urgency and unpreparedness of the Central Asian states to function on their own. The five Central Asian countries - Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan - lacked statehood prior to their incorporation into the USSR. After independence, they were left with Soviet centrally-planned economies as a basis for economic development and each country implemented a different variation of authoritarian governance (Pomfret & Anderson, 2001; Khan 2019). The abrupt change in regional governance in 1991 and 1992 led to a variety of different adaptation plans, inherently individually distinguishing each Central Asian republic politically and economically.

Kazakhstan, the largest Central Asian country, had the highest standard of living in 1991 out of all the Central Asian republics and had the closest connection to Russia even after

independence. This was due to the two countries' mutual collaboration in developing Kazakhstan's natural resources and the close relationship Kazakh President Nazarbayev maintained with Soviet leadership (Aitken, 2010). Beyond Russia's limited assistance, Kazakhstan, upon independence, immediately sought the help of foreign direct investment (FDI) to support its economy. Among its first investors were the United States and Russia, both largely motivated by Kazakhstan's vast oil reserves (Curtis, 2008). Kazakhstan has since succeeded in developing extensive foreign policy. The now independent country has demonstrated leadership in a variety of international organizations, collaborated with world leaders to improve its economic infrastructure, and reformed its higher education system, all helping to make Kazakhstan a competitive international power.

As a counterfactual example to Kazakhstan's development, Uzbekistan moved in the opposite direction developmentally, and removed itself from almost all international engagements. President Islam Karimov engaged in intense nationalization of Uzbekistan evident in his publication, "Ideology of National Independence." His nationalization process quickly closed off Uzbekistan's borders, restricted outside investment, and barely moved past the Soviet method of a centrally planned economy (March, 2010). Uzbekistan allowed limited international aid within its borders, yet shut off most opportunities for international scholars to explore its country's progress from within the state (Yalcin, 2002). This shut-out included Uzbekistan's general ambivalence to Putin's agenda in Central Asia (Nurullayev, 2016). The country shows signs of potential international progress with its new president, Shavkat Miriyoyev, who has already expressed a desire in improving relations with China, Russia, and the United States ("Uzbekistan's New Leader Pledges Better Ties with Russia, US"). Uzbekistan's path after

independence is vastly different from that of Kazakhstan and helps to highlight the singularity of Kazakhstan's development.

Internationally, Central Asian individual states are often lumped together in their battles of independence after 1991 due to the resulting establishment of un-democratic governance systems in the region (Hale, 2016). Through careful analysis, this thesis, however, establishes that through Kazakhstan's efforts and utilization of its strengths in foreign policy, Kazakhstan has developed a position in the international community independent of its historic positioning under Soviet control. This point alone has helped Kazakhstan succeed far past all other Central Asian countries. In addition to Kazakhstan's original efforts, numerous government-declared initiatives outline the country's goals for the future. The most recent of these initiatives is the Kazakhstan 2050 Strategy, which declares Kazakhstan's goal of gaining a position as one of the world's top thirty most developed countries (Nazarbayev, 2017). The Kazakh government's various goals for Kazakhstan are cited throughout this thesis and are used as metrics to measure and analyze the success of Kazakhstan's different foreign policy initiatives.



Figure 1.1: Map of Kazakhstan and bordering countries¹

Another important facet of Kazakhstan’s political actions is its geographic positioning. It maintains a unique position in the world, as it is strategically located between two major world powers, China and Russia. This is displayed in the map above. Nazarbayev’s skilled leadership helped Kazakhstan open its borders and establish itself as a country with a potential beyond that expected of a post-soviet autocratic government. This thesis will answer the question of how Kazakhstan’s foreign policy has grown under the leadership and outward focus of Nazarbayev and the Kazakh government. I argue that Kazakhstan, after independence, positioned itself in a place of power by using its ambitious foreign policy to bolster Kazakhstan’s leadership in international organizations, advance domestic economic infrastructure, and internationalize its

¹ This map shows Kazakhstan in relation to China, Russia, and other Central Asian countries to provide a context of geographical location for the rest of the thesis (Cooley, 2020).

higher education system. These aspects of Kazakhstan's outward-focused policy have strengthened relations with countries other than Russia. Because of these relations with other countries, Kazakhstan is able to exercise its independence and establish sovereignty distinct from the historical Russian dominance in the country.

The rest of chapter one will discuss the various existing academic arguments surrounding the question of Kazakhstan's foreign policy and relationship with Russia. This chapter also contains my methodology of research and explains the reasoning behind my primary areas of focus.

II. Methodology

This thesis asks the question of how the renovation of Kazakhstan's foreign policy has expanded under the leadership and outward focus of President Nur Sultan Nazarbayev and the Kazakh government. To answer it, I have shaped my argument around three areas of Kazakhstan's foreign policy and have examined each area's effect on Kazakhstan's historical partnership with Russia.

While a country's foreign policy can encapsulate a wide array of areas, I have analyzed a narrowed scope of foreign policy through analysis of three of Kazakhstan's policy initiatives that provide Kazakhstan the greatest opportunity to further increase their sovereignty. Each area of analysis demonstrates Kazakhstan's collaboration with other countries and international organizations. These collaborations provide new opportunities for Kazakhstan's development in sectors previously dominated by Russian influence. My thesis examines the cause of Kazakhstan's ambitious and outward-focused policies and the leadership of Nazarbayev. In each chapter I evaluate the various effects from this cause that come out of Nazarbayev's broader goals. My argument is that through a strong collaborative international presence, Kazakhstan has

effectively increased its sovereignty from Russia and improved Kazakhstan's standing in the international community. Nazarbayev has played a critical role in this ongoing achievement, as he prioritized extensive foreign policy and developed a diplomatic approach to international relations - a multi-vectored approach - to balance Kazakhstan's critical relationships with Russia, China, and the West. Kazakhstan's sovereignty from Russia is a combined result of Kazakhstan's leadership in international institutions, its facilitation of a strong Sino-Kazakh economic partnership, and the reform and internationalization of its higher education system.

Details confirming Kazakhstan's dependency fall beyond the scope of this thesis, as my research question focuses on the specific areas of development that Kazakhstan is using to establish sovereignty and is not seeking to establish dependency².

A variety of government initiatives have increased Kazakhstan's sovereignty from Russia and have improved the country's positioning in Central Asia. I support my argument by separating the different contributing pieces into three chapters that inform the reader of the facts relevant to my argument.

In order to define and measure the successes of Kazakhstan's policies, I outline the metrics of success for each policy. I first delineate what the government's original goals for that sector were, and after addressing Kazakhstan's motivations for that specific area of foreign policy, I evaluate whether and how those goals were achieved. To accurately depict the goals of the Kazakh government, I draw upon speeches found on various official Kazakhstan Government websites such as primeminister.kz, akorda.kz, and kazakhstan2050.com. I also draw from

² While this thesis does not discuss the details confirming Kazakhstan's dependence on Russia, here are some articles that delineate this process. Laruelle et al. (2019) outline the foreign policy vectors between Kazakhstan and Russia in detail. They discuss the details of the relationship during the Soviet Union's existence and after. Furthermore, Dawiša (1995) discusses Russia's foreign policy in post-Soviet Central Asia and goes into depth on the various ways that Russia establishes dominance in the region and continues its aggressive influence in the area. There is further discussion of the subject in the literature review.

speeches by different Kazakh leaders as well as various governmental decrees and initiatives. The speeches I have used all discuss Kazakhstan's motivations and plans for the future to best define its political goals. I have chosen this metric of analysis as it allows me to measure success in terms of Kazakhstan's official goals and achievements, instead of by potentially different international or individual perspectives. If I were to use other metrics, they may include a human rights or civil society analysis that would distract from the direct relationship of these initiatives to the ability of Kazakhstan to develop sovereignty beyond Russia's influence.

In using mostly government proclamations to measure Kazakhstan's success, it is necessary to acknowledge that Kazakhstan's government is authoritarian and historically, public statements of authoritarian governments can contain biases. I accommodate for this factor by only using parts of speeches where Nazarbayev states his goals and aspirations for Kazakhstan. For my research purposes, I use these goals as a baseline to measure Kazakhstan's advancement because, despite any potential for bias, these speeches were public and are available online, and therefore I will use them to hold Nazarbayev and the Kazakh government accountable.

Kazakhstan's demonstration of international leadership and its partnership with China are well established in literature. But my analysis of Kazakhstan's higher education reform focuses on the preliminary areas of Kazakhstan's development, as a large portion of reforms in Kazakhstan's higher education sector are still underway.

My thesis also discusses sovereignty and independence. These are terms that can be interpreted in many ways. For the purposes of this thesis, when I mention sovereignty I am specifically discussing interdependence sovereignty. I explain my decision for the differentiation and discuss the variety of definitions for the term in the literature review.

The rest of my thesis, beyond metrics for analysis of these domestic goals, is developed from a vast study of the academic literature available through the University of Michigan research databases. The majority of literature used are secondary sources that delineate Kazakhstan's foreign policy strategy of multi-vectorism, and analyze their education reforms and international memberships (Kassen, 2018). I chose to use primarily secondary sources because of the expansive availability of knowledge and analysis that they provide. By using secondary sources, I am able to aggregate primary sources and compare differing opinions on the variety of subjects I incorporate. Additionally, I have accessed and cited a variety of official websites, such as those of the United Nations Security Council, the World Trade Organization, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and the CIA World Factbook. These websites provide critical information on Kazakhstan's actions and the subsequent international perspective on said actions.

In preparation for writing this thesis I first read Nazarbaev's biography, *Nazarbaev and the Making of Kazakhstan*, to understand the longitudinal history of Kazakhstan's independence, as the book outlines Nazarbayev's leadership during the USSR and his presidency after independence. I also read Pauline Jones' *Oil is Not a Curse* to gain a wider knowledge of Kazakhstan's economic situation and utility of their natural resources (Aitken, 2010; Luong, 2011).

The time frame that my research encapsulates begins with the fall of the USSR and goes up until the end of Nazarbaev's presidency in early 2019. While this is a large timespan, I primarily use information from after 2000 to remain up to date on Kazakh international and domestic policies. This timespan enables a cohesive period to analyze with no change in leadership. I include analysis of the current president Kassym-Jomart Tokayev's influence on

Kazakhstan's foreign policy in only the conclusion as his presidential term began in 2019, after the cut off for my designated time period ("Toqaev Inaugurated As Kazakhstan's New President Following Election Protests", 2019).

This thesis brings together different areas of research to argue that Kazakhstan's significant international collaboration and relationships with the West have resulted in a modernized and internationally active state, allowing Kazakhstan to establish its independence from its history of Russian colonization. As a resource-rich country, Kazakhstan often is a point of in-depth economic research. I have chosen to evaluate only some aspects of Kazakhstan's economy in an effort to focus on the larger qualitative cause and effect of Kazakhstan's foreign policy and its effect on international relations instead of pursuing a solely economic approach.

Furthermore, I focus specifically on Kazakhstan's internationally-focused policies. My research argues that Kazakhstan is the most advanced of the Central Asian states and has moved past any assumption of a country completely dependent on its natural resources - a rentier state (Jones, 2011).

In my conclusion, I state the accumulated evidence established throughout my thesis and, while drawing on aspects of the 2050 Strategy, I make the final conclusion that Kazakhstan, through its outward-focused policies, has developed notable independence from Russia's strong influence.

III. Literature Review

Since the fall of the Soviet Union, the world has watched Soviet satellite states fall apart or form successful states through efforts including attempting democratization, foreign direct investment, and/or continuing a partnership with Russia. Post-1991 Eurasia has seen an immense

amount of literature covering development hypotheses, power dynamics, and economic predictions. As a continuation, the literature on Kazakhstan post-2000 addresses its unique geopolitical positioning and resource abundance. Much of this literature, while detailed and vast, does not connect Kazakhstan's foreign policy accomplishments with its subsequent increased autonomy from Russia, as it seeks out resources and opportunities for security elsewhere. This is a gap in the literature that I plan to fill with the information provided in this thesis.

A. Resource Curse Debate

A prevalent argument that exists in literature surrounding Kazakhstan's process of modernization debates the exact cause of its modernization and international reputation. Scholars on all sides of this multilateral debate cite Kazakhstan's achievements as either a product of Nazarbayev's strategic leadership and foreign policy approach, or as simply a result of the international community's dependence on its resources.

Kazakhstan maintains immense natural resources. This availability to natural resources aids Kazakhstan's positioning in the international community, as it makes the country desirable to investors. Its status as a post-Soviet autocracy has generated a lot of contradictory literature that battles between declaring Kazakhstan "gifted" or "cursed" with these resources. Scholars such as Warner and Franke et. al. provide evidence that connects a state's inefficiency with its simultaneous abundance of resources.

Warner (2001), and Franke et. al. (2009) assume the confirmatory side of the entrenched link between resource wealth and institutional and state weakness, establishing that access to natural resources dooms a country to an autocratic style of governance. Their literature highlights the direct link between resource abundance and top-heavy governments. In support of the

resource curse narrative, they point out that “resource-cursed” countries often suffer from the development of a dictatorial ruling elite and an overdependence on oil. Subsequently, these countries lack the proper institutions to develop a domestic investment environment due to their exclusive reliance on their natural resources to maintain their economy (Jones & Weinthal, 2011).

Frank et al. (2009) and Warner (2001) establish that a country’s dependence on natural resources does not often result in economic success but more often results in the development of autocratic governance. Franke et al. outline the benefits of oil revenue, as it provides a country with autonomy from a taxation dependence due to the already sufficient income. Franke et al. also draw direct connections between Kazakhstan's resource revenue and the likelihood of autocratic stability (Franke et al., 2009). Warner cites the absence of a correlation between GDP and natural resources, using this as support to definitively confirm that natural resources harm economic growth (Warner, 2001). The findings in this literature in no way doom any resource-rich developing country despite the high correlation found between these deficiencies and resource-rich countries.

Pauline Jones, among other scholars, leads the counter-literature, stating that a country with vast natural resources, such as Kazakhstan, is not necessarily condemned to poor institutional development. Her research uses an economic lens to debate the myths of the resource curse. She states that the ownership structures of the Central Asian countries are more to blame than their resource abundance for their poor institutional development. Supporting scholars emphasize the potential for resource-rich countries to develop into strong, balanced states if there is a will and ability to develop a profitable investment climate (Jones & Weinthal, 2011). Jones bases her research on a large case study into resource-rich post-Soviet countries and

concludes that ownership structure is the key variable in mediating mineral wealth and institutional outcomes. Her literature points to the various third variables that are often ignored when establishing the direct relationship between oil and authoritarianism. Traditionally, resource curse scholars such as Franke et al. focus on institutional deficiencies or lack of access. However, Jones emphasizes the need to also take historical, cultural, and geographical factors into account in data sets. Another weakness of the confirmatory resource curse debate is the failure to provide evidence outside of such a narrow time period, 1960-1990. Jones concludes that oil is not a curse, but it can be an obstacle to state advancement due to the ease of falling back on oil revenue. Sabna Ali and her co-authors (2019) further researched the relationship between natural resources and state structures, but focused on welfare measures through the connection between happiness and resource wealth. Their findings established overall resource wealth generally cannot be correlated with low levels of happiness, but found significant negative correlation between (oil) resource wealth and happiness when a country's resources are primarily oil based. This literature adopts a newer, conditional approach to the resource curse, providing modern researchers the ability to explore the development of Central Asia and Kazakhstan in a wider scope.

In this thesis, I address both sides of the resource curse debate and acknowledge that Kazakhstan's domestic setbacks are in part a result of the available abundance of natural resources within the Kazakh borders. However, I make the conclusion that these resources have enabled them to advance a variety of international economic relationships, using these natural resources as leverage. I additionally will answer whether modern Kazakhstan has the potential to advance into a more responsive and a developed country despite its ingrained foreign-investment-oriented natural resource ownership structure.

B. Kazakhstan-Russia Dependency

When researching post-Soviet countries, the issue of Russian dominance is a commonly debated subject. Much of the surrounding literature regarding Central Asia after 1991 debates the possibility for the region to achieve true independence from Russia. Scholars Khan and Owen argue that Russia's influence in Central Asia accounts for a large portion of the area's international engagement. Khan specifically indicates that any international engagement in Central Asia is due to Moscow's desire for strategic control. Owen et al. (2019) further Khan's point in explaining that in current international relations, Russia is using its imperialistic history in the region as a platform to advance and increase Russian dominance. Owen et al. compare Russia's actions in the area to that of the United States' past ventures and moderate imperialism in its close geographic neighbors, such as countries in Central America. Warner's research expands on this subject and explains that Moscow views Central Asia as its own "strategic sphere of influence", indicating Russia's possessive view of the area (Warner, 2001). An unintended consequence of the continued Russian dominance Owen et al. (2019) states is that Central Asian citizens are simultaneously "caught between the deep sociocultural ties that come with decades of socialization into Russian cultural practices and a growing distaste for Russia as a political entity." This acknowledges the complex but deep connection between Kazakhstan and Russia and Owen et al. cite this link as evidence of the impossibility of Kazakhstan's future sovereignty. Owen et al., Warner and Khan establish that Russia's interest in Central Asia will supersede Kazakhstan's efforts to increase its sovereignty.

Historically, Russia used its relationship with Central Asia to promote its "Europeanness" to the international community through emphasizing the differences between Russia and the

Central Asian states. However, Buranelli (2014) explains that this attempt only distanced Russia from its aspired title of a *European* state, making this specific Russian strategy in Central Asian null. This past plan emphasized areas of cultural and political separation between Russia and Central Asian countries. Buranelli's analysis of Russia's goals in the area highlight Russia's lack of genuine interest in Central Asia beyond that of economic and political control.

Further supporting the argument surrounding Central Asia's potential achievement of sovereignty, Roy Allison (2004) describes the increasing agency in the region and cites it as evidence that Kazakhstan is moving beyond helpless dependency. Allison acknowledges the increasing importance of the Central Asian region in today's politics. In doing so, he comments on Russia's modern policy efforts in the region—how Putin is motivated to pursue various vectors of collaboration to establish a stronger presence beyond that of the West or other countries. These efforts again confirm the surface level motivations of Russia in the region. Russia is inevitably one of Kazakhstan's primary international partners, but it is not a partnership of exclusivity and it cannot deny Kazakhstan its own sovereignty, despite its motives in the region.

In a more modern development, Ziegler (2014) supplements Allison's argument and acknowledges that in the realistic future, China is positioned to succeed past any ability of Russia to continue its lightweight colonization efforts. Ziegler further notes that the annexation of the Crimea serves as an event critical to motivating Kazakhstan's actions due to the similarities between the Crimea and Northern Kazakhstan, such as both regions' dominant Russian minority. Thus, Ziegler rationalizes Kazakhstan's actions to align with other powerful actors. I assert that Nazarbayev's goals for Kazakhstan recognize the need for fortified security and that Nazarbayev has sought to make Kazakhstan a location for viable competition between international partners,

an effort that has successfully granted it significant autonomy from Russia and Russian influence.

C. Value of Reputational Security

Reputational security is one of the major foundations of international relations scholarship and is often discussed in the context of post-Soviet states. The concept of reputational security emphasizes its importance to a country's overall national security endeavors and policies. I have collected a variety of sources that provide evidence for the value of sovereignty and subsequent recognized legitimacy of a country by the international community, as the term is applied to international relations (Keohane, 1999; Sartori, 1998; Cull, 2018; Ziegler, 2014). A "reputational-based security" is defined as "the degree of safety accruing to a nation state that proceeds from being known by citizens of other nations" (Cull, 2018).

Robert Keohane notes that a country's reputation and the importance it holds in the international community is a result of the capability that reputation has to shape international perspective. Furthermore, he states that when a country gains a particular reputation, that reputation will follow the country for a long time. He argues that a reputation of keeping agreements, one of aggressive self-interest, or one of toughness can all be useful depending on a country's ultimate goal (Keonhane, 1999). Furthermore, Anne Sartori (1998) analyzes the power of reputation in diplomacy and warns that a reputation received by a country can greatly impact that country's future diplomatic efforts and collaborations due to the historical longevity of a reputation. Throughout my analysis I emphasize that the early efforts of Kazakhstan to develop a positive and dependable reputation helped it to facilitate positive diplomatic engagements in the international community.

The literature reflects the importance of reputational security for countries that are surrounded by other countries that may not respect borders. As a post-Soviet state, Kazakhstan maintains precarious sovereignty while Russia looms close by. The independence of post-Soviet Central Asian states is particularly insecure given the historical colonization by Russia in the 18th and 19th centuries and their previous lack of independence (Pomfret & Anderson, 2001). The annexation of the Crimea by Russia is a cause to elicit concern from other countries with large Russian minorities, such as Northern Kazakhstan (“The World Factbook: Kazakhstan”; Ziegler, 2014). I address this factor and use it as evidence to reiterate the importance of Kazakhstan’s international collaboration and development of other strong partnerships.

Cull (2018) also addresses the importance of increasing foreign direct investment (FDI) in weaker states as a way of advancing reputational security. In his application of reputational security in Kazakhstan he declares “Nazarbayev’s international motives, while economically based, have also been an effort to establish legitimacy on an international scale” (Cull, 2018).

The need for reputational security originated from the growing practice of covering and analyzing international relations news on media platforms, as the greater the importance of a country to international relations, the more it appears in international media. Cull confirms the importance of international reputation by determining that if a country is able to garner acceptance on an international scale, it is less likely to be invaded by its neighbors (Cull, 2019). Cull (2019) emphasizes that foreign public engagement is the best possible way to develop and grow a country’s reputation and therefore its security. In Cull’s definition of reputational security, international recognition and respect of a country’s boundaries improve and protect the global community’s diplomatic investment through ensuring a country’s long-term existence. Cull ultimately concedes that it is a difficult concept to quantitatively measure, but it is possible

to observe and analyze a country's ability to cultivate international reputation through the variety of avenues that I have previously mentioned (Cull, 2019).

The better a country is known on an international scale, the less likely that it will fall victim to uncontested absorption into a larger, more powerful country. Kazakhstan's membership in international organizations, the UNSC and WTO, confirm the expansion of Kazakhstan's international recognition and help to assure its positioning as an important world leader. This lends Kazakhstan significant defensive security as well as economic gain.

D. What is Modern Sovereignty?

Sovereignty is a heavily debated topic in international relations literature. There are a variety of "types" of sovereignty and a country can qualify as sovereign through one definition but fail to achieve another, and these definitions are further differentiated in different historical times (Krasner, 2001). Nicholas Cull (2018) states that a modern sovereign state is one that is accepted on an international scale as "legitimately sovereign" over its territory, which he qualifies as a country's ability to be seen and appreciated in the international community (Cull, 2018).

However, contradicting Cull, Stephen Krasner argues that the rulers of a country are the actors that have the most control and determination over their own and other country's sovereignty. He supports his argument by emphasizing the ruler's ability to recognize other states as well as deny any established boundaries (Krasner, 2001). This thesis argues that President Nazarbayev has played a significant role in increasing Kazakhstan's sovereignty from Russia, and thus, examination of his role helps to prove the importance of a country's leader to its sovereignty.

Historically, countries previously incorporated in larger empires, such as the USSR, have difficulty establishing sovereignty after the dissolution of the empire. In 1991, the sudden break-

up of the Soviet Union left many Soviet satellite states in an insecure position between independent and still reliant on transactions that occurred within the previous states of the USSR. They each lacked complete control over their territories due to the remnants of Soviet dominance within their new borders. In considering the example of the Crimean annexation, the Russian government justifies its actions in the post-soviet spaces as ‘near abroad.’ “Near abroad” most often refers to the newly independent republics that are of political interest to Russia (Safire, 1994). Russia uses this terminology to legitimize its advances in the region and to equate its actions to Western geopolitical ventures (Wittke, 2018). In this reflection on Russian policy, Wittke notes that sovereignty in the post-Soviet space is actually contextual due to the remaining interconnectedness that exists between Russia and various post-Soviet states.

Stephen Krasner’s comprehensive work on the subject of sovereignty expands upon Wittke’s reflection as he outlines four different types of sovereignty. Krasner supports the statements from Keohane and Sartori in the previous section about the importance of reputation to a country’s international positioning. He further establishes that recognition is a critical aspect of maintaining international legal sovereignty (Krasner, 2001). International legal sovereignty refers to the capability of a country to be recognized as in control of its judicial and legal affairs.

This thesis contests Kazakhstan’s achievement of interdependence sovereignty, which Krasner defines as “the ability of public authorities to regulate the flow of information, goods, people, pollutants, or capital across the borders of their state” (Krasner, 2001). For the purpose of this thesis, all mention of sovereignty will be based on this definition. I have chosen to analyze this specific definition of sovereignty because it best represents the situation of Kazakhstan’s sovereignty, or lack thereof, from Russia. I establish that Nazarbayev understood the detailed metrics of interdependence sovereignty and understood where he could not

originally ensure Kazakhstan's sovereignty. He has now pursued a variety of initiatives aimed at increasing Kazakhstan interdependence sovereignty, ultimately solidifying Kazakhstan's official political positioning as completely separate to that of Russia and any remaining Soviet ties.

IV. Conclusion

This chapter presented important context on Kazakhstan's background and group relationship with the other Central Asian states. Their collaboration and shared history with Russia serve to further differentiate Kazakhstan's modern path and foreign policy initiatives. In the rest of this thesis, I will detail the three specific foreign policy areas where Kazakhstan has excelled and developed a variety of ways to achieve independence from Russia.

In Chapter two, I analyze Kazakhstan's leadership in international organizations and initiatives. I do this by outlining Kazakhstan's past cooperation in the Nunn-Lugar Threat Reduction Program, their temporary membership in the United Nations Security Council, and their recent inclusion into the World Trade Organization. I use Kazakhstan's recurrent aspirations to cooperate with the international community as evidence to support my analysis of their success in this initiative.

In Chapter three, I discuss Kazakhstan's economic collaboration with China to build critical infrastructure for Kazakhstan's rapidly expanding economy. China recently announced its ambitious Belt and Road Initiative, and through joint collaboration the Sino-Kazakh partnership has united the two countries to build critical economic and transport infrastructure within Kazakhstan.

In Chapter four, I detail and analyze the reform of the Kazakh higher education system, including the internationalization of their research capabilities. Higher education and research

capabilities have become critical to a country's advancement in the modern international community and Kazakhstan's robust reforms and international collaboration programs will help Kazakhstan attain its goal of advanced geopolitical positioning.

In the last chapter, I conclude and combine my research and argumentation to draw upon Kazakhstan's ambitious reforms and address the geopolitical future of Kazakhstan in the context of its foreign and domestic development goals. I specifically draw upon the provisions set in Kazakhstan's most recent government goal, the Kazakhstan 2050 Strategy. Given the discussion throughout my thesis, I hypothesize about Kazakhstan's capability to meet its most ambitious initiatives. I additionally discuss the importance of this topic for the United States' security concerns and make recommendations for future U.S. policy in the area.

In each chapter, each sector will be evaluated with specific metrics of success delineated from the Kazakh government's initiatives and goals. Each chapter concludes with analysis that supports the conclusion that Kazakhstan's outwardly focused foreign policy has enabled it, in many courses, to establish its modern independence and autonomy from Russia.

Chapter Two: Kazakhstan's Advancement Towards Reputational Security

I. Introduction

Since independence in 1991, Kazakhstan has significantly benefitted from the ambitious foreign policy of President Nazarbayev. In 1990, on the cusp of independence, the Central Asian republics signed the first treaty of the region and Kazakhstan was deemed the official head of the cohort, demonstrating leadership from Kazakhstan's inception (*Sovereignty After Empire: Comparing the Middle East and Central Asia*). Outside of Central Asia, Nazarbayev has played an important role in the international community on issues such as international security and economic collaboration. His leadership in the Nunn-Lugar program in 1992 originally propelled him to a place of recognition in the international security field. As Kazakhstan's first president, he expanded Kazakh international integration and pursued leadership in regional organizations, as well as promoting Kazakhstan's membership in more prestigious international organizations such as the United Nations and World Trade Organization. Through multilateral engagement, Kazakhstan propelled itself into a position of international recognition, where it has greater visibility and there is more potential for partners to take interest in continued Kazakh security and sovereignty from Russia's dominating regional influence.

A. Reputational Security Recap

Reputational-based security is a concept that is critical to the argument of this thesis and more specifically, this chapter. It has previously been defined as "the degree of safety accruing to a nation state that proceeds from being known by citizens of other nations" (Cull, 2018).

Reputational security can be acquired through both positive and negative international acknowledgement, from events such as providing aid to international organizations or a country

going to war. A country that is respected on an international scale is seen as “legitimately sovereign” over its territory (Cull, 2018). Working towards reputational security is especially useful for newer countries in geopolitically important areas, as it increases the security of their borders from potential aggressive geographic neighbors.

Kazakhstan has effectively established itself as a country deserving of international recognition. Kazakhstan’s original participation in the Nunn-Lugar non-proliferation efforts and its memberships in the UNSC, WTO and CICA created various new opportunities for Kazakhstan to connect with countries outside the post-Soviet space and international organizations. These relationships helped Nazarbayev’s goals of reputational security and further provided a diversity of partnerships and resources that have helped to legitimize Kazakhstan’s sovereignty from Russia.

This chapter will analyze areas of Kazakhstan’s demonstrated international leadership and characterize the country’s resulting reputation among the international community. I argue that Kazakhstan has gone to significant efforts to prioritize its participation as an actor in the international community, specifically regarding international security. Additionally, I argue these efforts have gained Kazakhstan recognition while simultaneously providing the state with security. Thus, through achieving international recognition and inserting itself into international affairs, Kazakhstan has gained value as a participant in the international community in addition to increasing its legitimate sovereignty as a country.

B. Metrics to Determine Successful Achievement in Reputational Security

Kazakhstan’s goals motivating its participation in international organizations varies depending on the specific organization or project, but often focuses on advancing its global

partnerships. Despite limited official declaration records of Kazakhstan's goal of international recognition, I use a compilation of Nazarbayev's speeches between 1997 and 2014 to assert that Kazakhstan aims to achieve a balance of positive relations with the world's major powers and the country's regional neighbors (Ambrosio & Lange, 2014). The multilateral foreign policy strategy that Kazakhstan pursues fulfills both of these goals. Furthermore, a variety of government addresses from 2002, 2007, and 2012 reflect Kazakhstan's desire to develop multilateral cooperation with the United States and European Union in addition to its traditional geopolitical partners Russia and China (Ambrosio & Lange, 2014).

Engvall (2015) states that Nazarbayev "has expressed a clear logic: to develop a role as a respectable international citizen that can be a pragmatic partner with all quarters of the globe." The aspiration for Kazakhstan to be a pragmatic partner "with all quarters of the globe" reflects the Kazakh government's commitment to seeking mutual support from a variety of international bodies, both states and organizations. This goal contextualizes Kazakhstan's collaborative outward actions and desire to engage in mutual support on a variety of different projects. In a speech in 2012, Nazarbayev emphasized the importance of international cooperation and announces, "We are ready to extend our cooperation on all questions and problems of regional security, within the frameworks of CSTO, SCO, CICA as well as with partner programs such as NATO and different international organizations" (Nazarbayev, 2012).

<<"Мы готовы углублять наше взаимодействие по всем вопросам и проблемам региональной безопасности, в том числе в рамках ОДКБ, ШОС, СВМДА, а также партнерских программ с НАТО и другими международными структурами" >>

Nazarbayev's statement recognizes the importance of international collaboration and champions Kazakhstan's preparedness to advance this goal. I argue that Nazarbayev's statements and the accumulated evidence of his motives collectively outline Kazakhstan's goals for its own

international collaboration, and that this outline can be used to measure the success of Kazakhstan's accomplishments.

II. The Nunn-Lugar Cooperative Threat Reduction Plan

Kazakhstan has been a strong advocate for international nuclear non-proliferation since its independence. After the fall of the USSR, many of the Soviet satellite states were left with massive stockpiles of nuclear weapons. The breakup of the Soviet Union resulted in an increased number of nuclear-armed countries in the world and 15 weapons facilities, nuclear stockpiles and test sites remained in Kazakhstan, making it a de facto nuclear state ("Fact Sheet: The Nunn-Lugar Cooperative Threat Reduction Program"). The nuclear arms left in newly independent countries was a threat to international security, as nuclear power is especially dangerous in the hands of a politically unstable new country ("Fact Sheet: The Nunn-Lugar Cooperative Threat Reduction Program"). Two US senators, Richard Lugar and Sam Nunn, initiated a large-scale de-nuclearization program, today recognized as the Nunn-Lugar program, although it was previously known as the US-Russia Cooperative Threat Reduction Program ("The Nunn-Lugar Project"). Ukraine and Belarus were also part of the program, as there were nuclear weapons left within their borders as well ("The Nunn-Lugar Project"). The map below shows the extent to which Kazakhstan was weaponized during Soviet times (Abzhaparova, 2011).



Figure 2.1: Map of Kazakhstan's Nuclear Resources in 1991³

Nuclear countries can use their access to nuclear weapons as a method of enforcing the strength of their borders from potential aggressors, as nuclear weapons are a powerful deterrent to potential invaders. However, despite the strong negotiating capabilities of nuclear countries, Nazarbayev collaborated with both Russia and the United States to remove all nuclear and biological weapons from Kazakhstan (Sidel & Levy, 2007). This initiative demonstrated Nazarbayev's critical leadership and helped develop what was the beginning of a strategic foreign policy plan. The renouncement of Kazakhstan's nuclear stockpile served to signal to many Western countries that Kazakhstan was a politically mature landscape. By showing leadership in this peace-motivated program, Kazakhstan gained international recognition as a country that prioritized stability in international security, which greatly helped to spur economic interest in the country.

³ This map of Kazakhstan shows the various nuclear stockpiles, test sites, and weapons bases that were within its borders in 1991 after the fall of the Soviet Union (Abzhaparova, 2011).

Together, Russia, the United States, and Kazakhstan developed a plan to denuclearize and close all stockpiles of nuclear and biological weapons left in Kazakhstan. For Kazakhstan to hold such a critical role in ensuring international security was monumental because of the tendency of many post-Soviet countries to reject opportunities for international collaboration, as was the case in Uzbekistan. In a previously classified document, Nazarbayev states, “Kazakhstan guarantees the carrying out of the elimination of all kinds of nuclear weapons” (Nazarbayev, 1992). This plan provided Kazakhstan an early opportunity to gain international recognition in the diplomatic community. Nazarbayev continued this leadership approach throughout his presidency through engagement and collaboration with world powers and international organizations.

Moreover, denuclearization increased Kazakhstan’s sovereignty outside the limits of just making a name for itself in the international community. Removing Soviet weapons from within its borders symbolically aligned with the policy of de-Sovietisation, meaning that Kazakhstan implemented a variety of social and political policies to lessen and remove the Soviet presence in Kazakhstan. The term “de-Sovietisation” categorizes attempts of post-Soviet countries to establish themselves as sovereign from Russia through actions distancing themselves from Soviet traditions, actions and, in this case, weapons (Abzhaparova, 2011). In denying the opportunity to become a nuclear state, Kazakhstan further differentiated itself from the “aggressive” and “militaristic” USSR, creating its own labels of “denuclearized” and “peaceful” (Abzhaparova, 2011). This differentiation helped to distinguish the newly independent Kazakhstan from Russia and other Central Asian countries on an international scale. Kazakhstan’s ability to redefine itself after independence has greatly contributed to its ultimate achievement of sovereignty from Russia.

III. The United Nations Security Council

Early in Kazakhstan's independence, Nazarbayev expressed interest in acquiring non-permanent member status on the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). Many of Kazakhstan's past initiatives and endorsements were aimed to establish itself as a worthy candidate for this position. These efforts ranged from the previously mentioned advocacy for nuclear disarmament, to stronger Eurasian economic and political integration (Engvall, 2015).

A contributing factor to Kazakhstan's eventual membership was Kazakhstan's initiative in the creation of the Conference Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA). Nazarbayev proposed the idea for this inter-governmental organization that would deal with important foreign relations between Asian countries. Kazakhstan's leadership on this project demonstrated a commitment to regional security and was internationally recognized as a bold undertaking in 1992 by a country that was seen as less dominant than Russia (Engvall, 2015).

While CICA was developed in the 1990s, it progressively gained legitimacy through extended membership and recognition. CICA summits were held about every two years among its growing membership that today includes 27 countries across Asia. The primary goal of joint-peace stability and cooperation persists under Kazakhstan's original goal (S-CICA: About CICA). This organization's growth served to boost the image of Kazakhstan's leadership capacity on an international scale and enabled Kazakhstan to be seen as a window to the rest of Central Asia (Engvall, 2015). Additionally, this leadership helped Nazarbayev acquire the position of Central Asia's Statesman. This title is earned by the Central Asian leader that has the most influence or perceived power in the international community and they act as a representative for the region and since independence, Nazarbayev has occupied this role (McGlinchey, 2019). CICA and Kazakhstan's demonstrated leadership in the region were among

the primary considerations taken into account when contemplating Kazakhstan as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council (S-CICA: About CICA).

Nazarbayev's success in winning the bid for non-permanent membership in the UNSC in 2017 was a new step for Kazakhstan's foreign involvement. After Kazakhstan secured this leadership position in such a widely recognized organization, Kazakhstan demonstrated what Engvall (2015) states as "the ultimate commitment to its goal." Through the accomplishment of membership in such a powerful international organization, Nazarbayev was able to demonstrate Kazakhstan's power and legitimacy to Kazakh citizens and the foreign community. Kazakhstan was developing itself as a legitimate international citizen and pragmatic partner. Kazakhstan was the first Central Asian country - and so far only - to gain a seat on the UNSC (Sanchez, 2018), and when highlighting this decision, Nazarbayev boasted that this action demonstrated trust in Kazakhstan to solve the world's problems (Nazarbayev, 2018b).

Throughout its two-year term on the UNSC, Kazakhstan advocated for the general interests of Central Asian countries in addition to encouraging support of UNSC projects and launched the UN Code of Conduct towards Achieving a World Free of Terrorism by 2045 (Vassilenko, 2019). Nazarbayev advocated to many countries for the support of this Code of Conduct by way of public speeches and meetings with state officials. Ultimately, Kazakhstan was able to garner written support from 78 countries as of March 2019 (Sanchez, 2018). While promoting international security and Eurasian integration, Nazarbayev achieved his long-term goal of international visibility through Kazakhstan's non-permanent seat at the UNSC (Engvall, 2015).

IV. The World Trade Organization

The recent inclusion of Kazakhstan into the World Trade Organization (WTO) has provided another opportunity for Kazakhstan to advance its international recognition and participation in the international community. Since 1996, the WTO has been evaluating Kazakhstan's readiness for membership. On November 30, 2015, the institution decided that Kazakhstan's accession package met the necessary requirements of membership (Kourmanova, 2015). Even so, 90% of Kazakhstan's trade was already with WTO members in 2015 (Coyer, 2015).

Achievement of WTO membership recognizes Nazarbayev's extensive efforts and commitment to the process of accession and provides a multitude of new opportunities for global economic integration. The WTO accession program ultimately improved Kazakhstan's investment climate but required significant reforms to Kazakhstan's economy. The in-depth negotiations for membership spanned a full 19 years. The accession conditions qualified Kazakhstan as a developed country due to its high GDP. Yet this qualification prohibits the country from significant aid that is provided by the WTO to "developing" countries (Amirbekova, 2017). Certain conditions of the accession placed limitations on Kazakhstan's previous import and export practices and have enforced new restrictions elsewhere in the Kazakh economy. These conditions help to confirm that the same economic policies are followed throughout the WTO Member States.

Before approving membership for any country, the stated goal of the WTO is to develop a cohesive plan to best adapt the countries' economic institutions to WTO standards. The WTO's agreement with Kazakhstan specifically eliminates quotas for the metallurgy industry. The absence of protective duties has created competitive prices for the metallurgy products, creating new markets for Kazakh export. This development is only a single example of the expected new

market opportunities, according to an analysis of the expected changes in Kazakh exports (Amirbekova, 2017). The expansion of market opportunities will continuously help Kazakhstan to diversify its economic partners and simultaneously decrease its overdependence on Russian economic assistance.

Countries that enter the WTO as a “developing” country receive aid to assist the country’s integration into the organization. Kazakhstan’s qualification as a “developed” country disqualified it for WTO aid and the required WTO reforms drew attention to critical areas of the country’s development. Those critical areas were Kazakhstan’s export industry and its previous methods of implementation for regulations and required reforms. These are areas Kazakhstan still has to improve upon to succeed and meet the standards of the WTO. The WTO has provided Kazakhstan with opportunities for new markets and increased exports, but the regulations required by the WTO have also limited the growth of other economic sectors due to certain WTO-enforced limits on production. Despite the required reforms, this membership has bolstered Kazakh economic capacity and improved Kazakhstan’s perceived reliability in the international system. The WTO knowingly holds its member states to specific standards and guidelines and since Kazakhstan became a member, it can be assured that it is a more dependable investment environment (“Understanding the WTO – Standards and Safety”). Furthermore, WTO membership has increased Kazakhstan’s ability to engage in international discussions and policy implementation.

The accession of the WTO has provided Nazarbayev more leverage as an internationally respected country and has widened the opportunity for foreign partnerships by also expanding Kazakhstan’s network of investors. The country continues to pursue an active role in the organization with hopes of spurring greater global interest in Kazakhstan’s economic institutions

and natural resources. The 2020 WTO ministerial conference is set to be held in Kazakhstan's Capitol, Nur-Sultan, and is expected to host 4000-5000 people ("POLITICS & SOCIETY; WTO Ministerial Conference to be Held in Nur-Sultan in June 2020"). The high level of involvement of Kazakhstan in the WTO is both a move to increase the relevance of the country on a global scale, and a strategic way of hosting members from all 168 Member States of the WTO. This engagement turns the future conference into a chance for Kazakhstan to uphold its reputation as an internationally engaged country and attract interest of more foreign investors/partnerships. Kazakhstan's WTO membership has helped contribute to the success of Nazarbayev's goals of economic integration and international contribution.

V. Conclusion

Kazakhstan has successfully established itself as a strong, reliable member of international institutions and as a leader in its geographic area – a country deserving of international recognition. Through gaining membership in respected international organizations, it has expanded its network to new international organizations and countries. Kazakhstan strategically maneuvered its foreign policy and now occupies an important role in the international community. This accomplishment both fulfills Nazarbayev's goals for the country and helps to provide an extra layer of security to Kazakhstan's autonomy, due to its elevated presence in the global community.

Kazakhstan's diplomatic strengths, alongside its support of international institutional membership, have contributed to the success of Nazarbayev's achievement goals – to gain international relevance and to develop a reputation as a strong, autonomous country. Finally, I have confirmed that these accomplishments affirm Nazarbayev's stated reputational ambitions

and greatly benefit Kazakhstan's economic and defense positioning because of the stated utility of reputational security.

Chapter Three: The Critical Contributions of the Sino-Kazakh Strategic Partnership

I. Introduction

After the fall of the Soviet Union, Kazakhstan lacked the critical economic and developmental infrastructure necessary to effectively take advantage of domestic natural resources. Due to this absence of infrastructure, Nazarbayev began to reach out to foreign investors and countries outside of the former USSR to offset lost economic infrastructure and help it grow its natural resource economy (Chang & Kassymbekova, 2012). Nazarbayev established a new relationship with the People's Republic of China (PRC) that has been critical to Kazakhstan's progress towards its goals. In January 1992, the two countries officially agreed to a diplomatic relationship of friendship and cooperation. These early agreements originally developed because of the similarities in terrain and culture in the Western Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) that spanned both China and the edge of Kazakhstan's Eastern border (Akataeva, 2006; Álvarez, 2015).

A strategic partnership between Kazakhstan and China was developed throughout a series of collaborative economic projects and pursuits. For example, the official establishment of a diplomatic relationship in 1992 was one of the first definitive commitments between China and newly independent Kazakhstan. However, 1997 marked the beginning of a more serious relationship due to China's President, Li Peng's, determination and massive investment in Kazakhstan's AktobeMunaiGas company at the time (Kembayev, 2018).

While China was making significant investments in Kazakhstan, the late 1990s saw a relaxation of Russia-Kazakhstan relations as Russia lessened previously heavy-handed Soviet economic and political control. This made the budding China-Kazakhstan relationship grow even stronger. China became a critical partner for Kazakhstan, and their bilateral relationship of

occasional collaboration grew into what is now a strategic partnership dependent on mutual economic and infrastructural aid. The modern strategic partnership has grown to incorporate economic, infrastructural, and social collaboration. The countries' partnership today stands to threaten Russia's influence in Kazakhstan and the greater Central Asian region (Álvarez, 2015).

This chapter will detail and analyze the various sectors that have benefited due to the Chinese-Kazakh partnership. I argue that this partnership enables Kazakhstan to evade significant Russian dependence. The partnership also facilitates growth through the development of economic infrastructure, the increased access to a massive new market for Kazakhstan's natural resources, and the construction of major infrastructure within Kazakhstan that increases their output potential. Kazakhstan's resources are among China's highest imports (Kembayev, 2018). Additionally, China and Kazakhstan mutually gain from this partnership, as they stand together on important political issues such as terrorism, secularism and border security.

A. Multi-vector Foreign Policy and Metrics to Determine Successful Achievement in Economic Development

In order to understand the metrics I am using to measure the success and effectiveness of the Sino-Kazakh relationship, it is essential to define Kazakhstan's multi-vector foreign policy and analyze statements from various Kazakh government addresses.

Kazakhstan's foreign policy strategy is vital to maneuvering its geopolitical situation. It is the largest landlocked country in the world and bordered by two of the world's strongest superpowers, Russia and China. Nazarbayev understood that cooperative relations with surrounding countries was and is critical to maintain control in the region and ongoing collaboration with each individual country (Clarke, 2015). For the purpose of this chapter, various aspects of Kazakhstan's multi-vector foreign policy will be analyzed through its role

in Chinese relations. Kazakhstan's partnership with China occupies a large space in Kazakhstan's foreign policy, but every other individual foreign relationship is critical and continuously maintained for the economic aid and security that it provides Kazakhstan.

The current relationship between Kazakhstan and China is made possible because of Kazakhstan's strategy of multi-vectored foreign policy. This approach to foreign policy is a continued development from early Kazakh independence. A country that multi-vectored foreign policy separates its foreign relations with each partner country into "vectors" that are then differentiated further and represent the different aspects of the relationship (economic, political, security). The country, in this case Kazakhstan, then balances each individual vector with the others in order to avoid conflict. A multi-vectored foreign policy enables a country to balance alliances between multiple, potentially conflicting, superpowers. Kazakhstan accomplishes this by keeping its relationships with each ally separate (Koch, 2013). For Kazakhstan, the primary countries that have conflicting interests are China, Russia, and the United States because of their vastly different economic, political, and ideological goals. Multi-vectorism is a strategy that has enabled Kazakhstan to develop multiple foreign policy pillars with each country, both economically and politically, while making sure to not prioritize one over the other (Engvall, 2015). Kazakhstan is dependent on economic aid from a multitude of competing countries and is able to achieve harmonious individual partnerships through balancing its various vectors with each country.

China has been able to contribute significantly to Kazakhstan's infrastructural development, and this aid is directly aligned with Nazarbayev's commitment to building up Kazakhstan's capacity for trade. This motivation is evident in a government address where Nazarbayev calls

for a continued development of resource potential, and he specifically names his intention to “improve quality of transportation and logistics infrastructure” (Nazarbayev, 2018a).

Kazakhstan’s multi-vectored foreign policy facilitates Kazakhstan’s aforementioned goal of maintaining *positive* relations with its international partners. In a variety of Nazarbayev’s addresses, the trading opportunities that China’s market enables and its ability to provide Kazakhstan with the necessary infrastructural resources are highlighted as motivating aspects for continued partnership with China (Ambrosia & Lange, 2014). This chapter argues that China is the primary foreign partner that assists Kazakhstan’s economic and infrastructural goals.

The ultimate strategy of this multi-vectored foreign policy in the economy is to maintain productive partnerships with traditionally competing countries that play essential roles in various areas of Kazakhstan’s development. Overall, there is not a specified goal to minimize Kazakhstan’s dependence on just one country, but this strategy has been essential in Kazakhstan’s increasing sovereignty.

China’s increased presence in Kazakhstan’s development has largely helped to offset Kazakhstan’s dependence on Russian resources and aid, thus serving to decrease the intensity of the Russia-Kazakhstan economic vector. The specificities of Kazakhstan’s successes with China will outlined throughout the rest of the chapter through detailed analysis of Sino-Kazakh economic collaboration, trade metrics, and their shared memberships in economic and political organizations.

II. The Economic Role of China in Kazakhstan

China is one of the world’s largest economies and is the world’s largest exporter (excluding the EU), and this economic powerhouse has become deeply ingrained in a partnership

with Kazakhstan through classic economic relations including export, import, and infrastructural development in the region (“Trade Statistics by Country / Region”). China has constructed significant transportation infrastructure in Kazakhstan to further its economic and international ambitions. Before this, Kazakhstan did not have a viable transportation network, making China’s contributions critical to development.

Figure 3.1 below shows the exports of Kazakhstan to China and the imports from China to Kazakhstan. It also demonstrates the growth in their economic activity over the years, and its expansion after 2000.

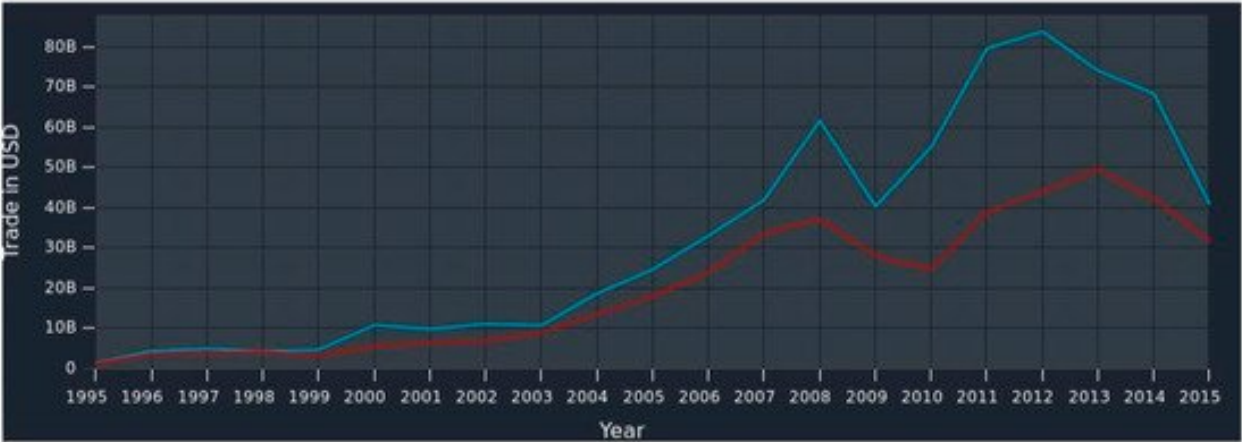


Figure 3.1: Graph of Kazakh exports to China and Kazakh imports from China⁴

Specifically, in 2017, Kazakhstan exported a total of 5.86 billion dollars of its overall 44.1 billion dollar export total to China (“OEC - Kazakhstan (KAZ) Exports, Imports, and Trade Partners”). These statistics demonstrate the importance of Kazakhstan’s role in the international economy and demonstrate the interconnectedness of Kazakhstan and China’s economies. In 2015, Kazakhstan managed to achieve a positive trade balance of 110 million between its imports and exports with China. This positive trade balance is evident in Figure 3.1 above and

⁴ The blue line represents the exports of Kazakhstan to China, between 1995 and 2015, and the red line represents the imports from China during the same time span (Choi, 2019).

was a huge accomplishment when compared to the data from the beginning of the Sino-Kazakh trade relationship (Choi, 2019).

China took an early interest in Kazakhstan. In 1997, China made its largest investment abroad when it bought a 60% share in Kazakhstan's AktobeMunaiGas for 4.3 billion dollars (Kembayev, 2018). China's early interests in Kazakhstan were related to Kazakhstan's energy resources, and investment into AktobeMunaiGas has been profitable for China and has solidified their investments in Kazakhstan's economic future ("OIL; CNPC-AktobeMunaiGas Ups Oil Output 21% in 2017"). By purchasing a majority share in the gas company, China immediately ensured that it would obtain a strong presence in Kazakhstan's energy sector, which has led to the further joint development of both gas and crude oil pipelines. Crude oil and gas are Kazakhstan's largest exports to China, and the ongoing construction of pipelines has helped to facilitate an easier transaction (Choi, 2019). Originally, China's early commitment to the construction of an Eastern pipeline originating in the Kazakh oilfields resulted in Kazakhstan's agreement to a solidified Sino-Kazakh partnership (Kembayev, 2018). In addition to the construction of a gas pipeline, the negotiations included the guarantee of legal rights to each other's citizens and companies in their respective territories ("Indikativnyi plan razvitiia zakrytogo aktsionernogo obshchestva Natsional'naia kompaniia po transportirovke nefi 'KazTransOil' na 2000–2005 gg" [Indicative Plan for the Development of the Closed Joint-Stock Company National Company for Oil Transportation KazTransOil for 2000–2005]). This cooperation creates a supportive environment for further negotiations and collaboration.

Early on in the Sino-Kazakh economic collaboration, President Xi Jinping and Nazarbayev signed an agreement that provided China with an 8.4 percent stake in the Kashagan oil field and advanced the Central Asia-China pipeline further westward. This increased stake grew China's

share in Kazakh oil production to a total of 22% (Perlez, 2013). The economic collaboration between the countries continues to expand beyond a lone bilateral partnership and now incorporates the larger Eurasian area. China's Belt and Road Initiative has plans to expand infrastructure into every Central Asian republic, and Kazakhstan has served as a supporter and facilitator of this project in the early discussions of these plans (Akataeva, 2015).

A helpful aid in the development of the Sino-Kazakh bilateral partnership is the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). The SCO, an organization that covers economic, political, and security issues for many Eurasian countries, has been a vital platform for the continuation of the Sino-Kazakh partnership, as it enables them to collaborate on a variety of broad issues in the region (Alimov, 2018). One of the most essential areas to the expanding Sino-Kazakh bilateral partnership is the energy sector. (Koch, 2013). In 2001, the SCO propelled the energy discussion by providing an official multi-country negotiation space, an important development, as the relationship between China and Kazakhstan regarding energy resources is China's most direct path for influence in Kazakhstan (Serikkaliyeva, 2018). The institutional partnership provided by the SCO has created a platform for a multitude of different conversations on topics ranging from security to the more dominant topic of economic collaboration.

While Kazakhstan's multi-vector strategy enables the leveraging of benefits for Kazakhstan, China also greatly benefits from Kazakhstan's cooperation in its various initiatives through increased access to resources and the provided opportunity to further develop its Belt and Road initiative (Clarke, 2015; Serikkaliyeva, 2018). The SCO has become a cornerstone of this relationship and an important space for communication that involves Russia as well. While the PRC and Russia are the two nuclear powers and UNSC permanent members in the SCO, the SCO facilitates a platform where Russia, China and Kazakhstan can interact and work together

(Choi, 2019). Kazakhstan arguably is the next most engaged member after China and Russia. The SCO provides an official space for Kazakhstan to serve as a partner to China, as well as a helpful advocate for other Central Asian countries that have resources to offer (Movkebaeva, 2013).

Choi (2019) argues in his study that there are problems that have been primarily ignored in the Sino-Kazakh partnership. His study is about the effect that Kazakhstan and the PRC's economic distance and geographical remoteness has on their partnership. In a quantitative analysis of China and Kazakhstan's economic transactions, the results indicate a greater overall benefit for China. However, Choi concedes that the relationship is rapidly changing and that the current infrastructure programs such as the creation of the dry port Khorgos, Kazakhstan's recent membership into the WTO, and the advancement of the SCO have all altered the economic relationship in Kazakhstan's favor (Choi, 2019).

The Sino-Kazakh engagement in the SCO and in other agreements provide opportunities of social and political collaboration in addition to the original economic agreements, that further enhance this partnership. Kazakhstan provides resources for China's development projects, while China has reciprocated with financial support, such as providing Kazakhstan with a loan equivalent to 10 billion dollars after the sharp decline in the economy after 2008. This loan helped Kazakhstan manage the crisis resulting from the fall in oil prices ("China Lends Crisis-Hit Kazakhstan \$10 Bln"). This collaboration and the importance of Kazakhstan to the success of China's Belt and Road Initiative serve as counterweights to offset potential overdependence of Kazakhstan on China.

While it could be argued that Kazakhstan has shifted some of its dependency on Russia to China, Kazakhstan maintains a diversity of partnerships with its multi-vectored foreign policy.

The Sino-Kazakh partnership provides Kazakhstan with greater economic and political options and is essential to maintaining its sovereignty. The Sino-Kazakh partnership is one of Kazakhstan's vectors of foreign policy, and it in no way dominates other areas of Kazakhstan's economic or political negotiations and partnerships. This is because Kazakhstan's economic partnerships with the WTO, the United States, and the Central Asian republics collectively help to balance out the strength of the Sino-Kazakh relationship, just as the Sino-Kazakh relationship has helped to balance out Kazakh economic dependence on Russia (Konkakov and Kubayeva, 2016). The most critical factor of this relationship is the provided economic and infrastructural support that China has provided Kazakhstan.

III. The Renovation of Economic Infrastructure

The Sino-Kazakh relationship has advanced from that of purely economic focus to a wider strategic partnership. Important aspects of the partnership have developed due to China's new global development project, the Belt and Road initiative (BRI) (Serikkaliyeva, 2018). The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), also known as the Modern Silk Road, is a Chinese-lead project with the goal of creating a comprehensive international network of railways, highways, and energy pipelines, in addition to relaxed requirements for border-crossings (Chatzky & McBride, 2019). As previously mentioned, Kazakhstan was left with the remnants of Soviet-built infrastructure after independence that is still in dire need of reconstruction. Both the railway and automobile sectors suffer from inadequate maintenance and construction despite their critical role in Kazakhstan's economy. There is an absence of adequate roads to places other than the main cities and the railway stations lack technical equipment. These weaknesses have greatly impeded Kazakhstan's transportation network and productivity (Akataeva, 2015). These

infrastructural needs have already benefited from China's BRI because of China's plan to use Kazakhstan as a transportation hub between Europe and Central Asia.

The most recent BRI developments have aided Kazakhstan's internal development and overall economic capacity. These advancements grew from critical foundational collaboration agreements, beginning in 1992 with the creation of an "unobstructed passage through a railway crossing named 'Friendship – Alashankou', an original point for transportation cooperation between China and Kazakhstan" (Akataeva, 2015). After the declared infrastructural "friendship," on November 23, 1999, in a joint Sino-Kazakh declaration on strengthening cooperation in the twenty-first century, Jiang Zemin and Nazarbayev proclaimed the intention of their countries to further facilitate economic cooperation by strengthening mutual trust and developing the New Silk Road. For that purpose, on December 23, 2002, China and Kazakhstan signed another agreement, the Treaty on Good Neighborliness, Friendship, and Cooperation. This was an agreement to transform their mutual borders into "frontiers of eternal peace and friendship by: (a) intensifying their political and security cooperation; (b) enhancing economic ties; and (c) promoting social and cultural links" (Kembayev, 2018).

China's Belt and Road Initiative was first publicly announced in Astana in 2013, and China used Kazakhstan as a springboard for the global program (Higgins, 2018). Kazakhstan's increased participation in the BRI has led to massive infrastructural and economic growth in the central regions of Kazakhstan. One especially important project has been the creation of the dry port in Khorgos. Chinese and Kazakh workers built the – now functioning - largest dry port in the world. It is planned to be a critical point of infrastructure for the Eurasian route of the BRI that will branch into both Europe and Central Asia. Khorgos is vital to the Eurasian route of the BRI because of its strategic positioning on the Sino-Kazakhstan border (Higgins, 2018). China

has additionally facilitated the growth of an entirely new city to house the workers at this port, thus spurring economic growth in a previously undeveloped area.

As both an individual initiative and complement to this larger project, an agreement in 2011 was signed by Kazakhstan and China, establishing that China would help develop infrastructure in Kazakhstan and, in turn, receive a portion of Kazakhstan's natural resources (Koch, 2013). Additionally, visa-free transportation was established in order to open critical trade checkpoints such as Khorgos (Akateva, 2015). These projects signal the continued expansion of the Sino-Kazakh bilateral partnership.

As the relationship grows, geopolitical alliances are revised in the region. Wasserman (2019) affirms that "recent shifts in geopolitics mean that China is now the actor with the ability and interest – due to its Belt and Road Initiative – to contain Russia in Central Asia." China has extensive resources to initiate development, and Kazakhstan will continue to greatly benefit from Chinese-supported infrastructure construction and economic collaboration.

On September 7, 2013, the two countries adopted a Program of Development of Trade and Economic Cooperation until 2020 ("Казакхстан и Китаи решат проблему трансграничных рек" [Kazakhstan i Kitai reshat problemu transgranichnykh rek; "Kazakhstan and China Solve the Problem of Transboundary Rivers"]). The program engages in the construction of a high-tech and high-speed transportation system that will connect European, Asia-Pacific, and South Asian economic regions. This project will serve to connect previously geographically isolated countries and because of Kazakhstan's early involvement, Kazakhstan will benefit from future economic collaboration in the area and on the route (Shepard, 2016). These railways began to run from the East to the West in 2014 and are completely supported by Nazarbayev, as this infrastructural development furthers his goal of making Kazakhstan into a

“transcontinental land bridge” (“Казакхстан и Китай решат проблему трансграничных рек” [Kazakhstan i Kitai reshat problemu transgranichnykh rek; “Kazakhstan and China Solve the Problem of Transboundary Rivers”]; Nurshayeva, 2013; Kembayev, 2018).

Both the variety and volume of Sino-Kazakh collaborative infrastructure programs have enabled Kazakhstan to continue its economic growth. Ultimately, this infrastructure is and will be critical for the continuance of Kazakhstan’s overall expansion as a country.

IV. Conclusion

Overall, the Sino-Kazakh relationship has expanded over time and has provided Kazakhstan with necessary infrastructure to facilitate the growth of its economy and rising international relevance. However, China is also a geo-politically essential partner in Kazakhstan’s development of autonomy and recognition beyond that of a post-Soviet country. Nazarbayev had emphasized a desire to overcome any overreliance on natural resources due to the historical tendency of resource-rich countries to depend on resource availability (Nazarbayev, 2018a). However, despite the importance of natural resources to the two countries’ bilateral relationship, the Sino-Kazakh partnership continues to grow in various other areas such as infrastructural advancement and educational collaboration (Konkakov and Kubayeva, 2016; Alvarez, 2015). Additionally, the Sino-Kazakh partnership on the gas and oil pipelines critically reduces Russian influence within Kazakhstan’s natural resource sector (Alvarez, 2015).

While this bilateral relationship has a central focus on economic and energy motivations, Kazakhstan has gained Chinese support for its international status, which protects its security and helps to legitimize its borders with further reputational security. The Belt and Road Initiative is occasionally viewed as a project of international domination, but the SCO has helped to develop a trusting relationship between the two countries that serves to collaboratively aid each country’s

individual goals and assuage any territory concerns (Standish, 2019). The multi-vectored approach to Chinese relations has served as a critical technique in managing these developments and will continue to aid Kazakhstan by providing leeway when balancing alliances between Russia and China with the ongoing separated projects and economic negotiations.

Despite past events resulting in potential instability in the region, such as the war in Afghanistan and the Color Revolution, the Sino-Kazakh relationship has persisted, demonstrating the commitment and diplomatic success of both countries (Choi, 2019). Considering the Sino-Kazakh relationship going forward, some of the largest obstacles are those of domestic concern, such as public distrust of China's actions. Kazakh citizens have historically viewed China as a geographical aggressor and one that has only self-interest, but public opinion has little influence over the future collaboration of China and Kazakhstan (Koch, 2013). I have demonstrated throughout this chapter that Kazakhstan plays an indispensable role in China's energy sector and is a critical partner, necessary for the success of China's modern Silk Road. The Sino-Kazakh relationship will also continue to aid Kazakhstan by providing leeway for its historical dependence on Russia and enable Kazakhstan to seek out resources and aid elsewhere through ongoing projects and further international engagement. Ultimately, this strategic partnership is advantageous to both China and Kazakhstan, and the mutual benefit reinforces the strength and possibility for future cooperative advancement of the Sino-Kazakh relationship.

Chapter Four: Kazakhstan's Internationalization of Higher Education

“The monopoly of legitimate education is now more important, more central, than is the monopoly of legitimate violence”

- Ernest Gellner in *Nations and Nationalism*

I. Introduction

Education is a critical area of development because of its potential to contribute to the participation of a country in global competition and the transformation of society. Kazakhstan has sought out a variety of different ways to grow as an autonomous country and has used the path of higher education as a primary way to modernize and promote its national agenda while attempting de-Sovietisation within its borders (Kissane, 2005). Kazakhstan additionally has an ambitious goal of entering the top thirty most developed countries in the world under its Kazakhstan 2050 Strategy. The country's educational reforms aim to create a system that will increase its international respect while bringing it closer to its ambitious development goal (Nazarbayev, 2017).

Kazakhstan has adopted foreign strategies to improve its higher education institutions and to advance the intellectual level and skills of its people, through a process labeled “internationalization” (Li, 2018). Kazakhstan has both imported and exported resources that have helped it restructure its higher education system. After independence, Kazakhstan's attempts to internationalize and transform the Soviet education system were motivated by the goal to meet the modern world's standards of education (Ahn, 2018). The Soviet education system underwent reform during Soviet times, but its curriculum consistently focused on enforcing a collective mentality before postsecondary education. Higher education in the USSR placed an emphasis on

vocational training and students' preparedness to contribute to the workforce instead of on individual achievement and scholarship, as the USSR prioritized the success of the state instead of the individual (Kuraev, 2016). The definition of modernity in education has transformed and progressively incorporates the engagement of significant domestic efforts and international collaboration. This increased engagement results from the growing importance of geopolitics in higher education and its role in intertwined country collaboration (Koch, 2014). An internationalized education is becoming increasingly common, and Kazakhstan has sought to achieve the standards held by prestigious, internationally-known universities (Serikkaliyeva, 2019).

The post-Soviet transition revealed Kazakhstan's need for significant reform in its higher education system. The government has focused on internationalizing the higher education system to meet global standards and to cultivate a knowledge-based economy. A knowledge-based economy is characterized by the combination of designing appropriate knowledge infrastructures as well as developing human capital. Human capital is characterized by the skills and capabilities of an individual or group of people, and the subsequent benefit that those skills contribute to the economy and productivity of a country (Peter & Humes, 2003). Kazakhstan's efforts are guided by international standards set by the Western world's more prestigious research institutions. These standards are understood in the academic world as research quality, access to academic and research resources, and competitive instruction (Room, 2000). Consequently, Kazakhstan has completely rebuilt and reorganized its higher education system and shaped their efforts around international standards, structures, and partnerships to meet these standards.

This chapter will lay out information to connect Kazakhstan's achievements of higher education reform with the country's increased development potential. It will analyze

Kazakhstan's process of internationalization by mirroring Western higher education infrastructure (Koch, 2014). Additionally, this chapter will establish that Kazakhstan's attempts to utilize international resources have helped Kazakhstan harness soft power to further assist development and establish dominance in the region and with its international partners.

Kazakhstan higher education increasingly approaches a level that can compete with internationally prestigious institutions. Kazakhstan continues to work towards developing its higher institution infrastructure to compete with its prestigious academic partners.

A. Internationalization and Globalization Terminology Specification

Internationalization and globalization are both terms that are heavily used when discussing the changing global educational environment, however there is an important distinction between the two. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Culture Organization (UNESCO) defines globalization in education to concern "the flow of technology, economy, knowledge, people, values...across borders." In this definition, globalization of education entails the broader aspects that can be gained and changed through international collaboration, such as adoption of one country's education values in combination with those of the home country.

Internationalization of education refers to the incorporation of more specific international aspects, such as curriculum, research, and institutional collaboration (Li, 2018). An example of globalization in education is the new widespread acceptance of multi-lingual instruction at a higher level. An example of internationalization of education is Kazakhstan's incorporation of China's curriculum into various courses at its institutions.

In this chapter, I will mainly focus on the Kazakh government's goal to internationalize its higher education, as internationalization is more directly in line with a government's political

and economic motivations to compete in a globalized marketplace (Li, 2018). However, the terminology of globalization will come up in broader contexts.

B. Metrics to Determine Successful Reform of Kazakh Higher Education

Kazakhstan has set specific goals with the hopes of spurring an accelerated modernization of their economy. The Kazakhstan 2050 Strategy highlights the importance of modern technology to academic achievement. In one of the outlined goals, Nazarbayev encourages the incorporation of more technology into curriculums, as well as also emphasizing the fourth priority of the Kazakhstan 2050 Strategy - to improve the quality of Kazakhstan's human capital. Nazarbayev demanded that the education system be reformed and focus on the development of critical thinking and research capabilities, specifically with a focus on improving higher education quality (Nazarbayev, 2017). Nazarbayev recently announced his goal to make Kazakhstan a trilingual country, as in addition to the national importance of Russian and Kazakh, he recognizes the importance of the English language in new technological and industrial reform and advancement (Nazarbayev, 2018b). Kazakhstan's goal to become a trilingual nation will be used as a metric of Kazakhstan's efforts to incorporate English into their higher education system.

Intertwined with Kazakhstan's goals for its education system is Nazarbayev's goal of international collaboration. A hopeful outcome of this goal is the development of joint academic and research projects with other competitive foreign universities (Nazarbayev, 2018a). In the same speech that he announced these aspirations, Nazarbayev emphasized that Kazakh students should be dedicated Kazakh citizens in culture, language, and history, as well as prepared for the modern world with a "progressive and global worldview" (Nazarbayev, 2018a). The emphasis on domestic education by the Kazakh government seeks to motivate students to achieve a

competitive degree within Kazakhstan; the ability to do so subsequently enhances feelings of Kazakh pride. The reforms for Kazakh higher education also seek to incorporate critical international expertise and experience into their education to teach students a global worldview. This is all aimed to foster better preparation of students to contribute to the globalizing economy. I use Nazarbayev's declarations as metrics to measure Kazakhstan's progress on these goals through analysis of domestic education, educational partnerships, and international academic cooperation.

II. Domestic Higher Education Reform

Kazakhstan has undergone numerous stages of educational reform since independence. More recent reforms have significantly altered higher education infrastructure and sought to revamp Kazakhstan's underdeveloped research capabilities. Educational attainment is widely cited as the most direct area that increases human capital and thus, economic development. Florida et al. have found that the ability to increase a country's human capital leads to an increase of a region's income and wealth. By raising average Kazakh income, Kazakhstan will be able to increase their GDP per capita, leading to greater overall economic capacity throughout the country (Florida et al., 2008). While the various reforms are executed by individual policies and intentions, they have an additional underlying goal of integrating Kazakhstan's higher education into the "world educational space," indicating the increased transferability of a Kazakh University education (Jilkishieva et al., 2019). The Kazakh government also demonstrates a simultaneous recognition of the importance of knowledge as a commodity in the international political space (Li, 2018). Thus, a more competitive education and the ability to collaborate on

an international scale with research institutions and important industry advancement is critical to Kazakhstan's advancement beyond that of just its education system (Jumakulov, 2019).

A. State Education Development Programs

In 1991, the structure and foundation of Kazakh higher education institutions differed from that of the dominant higher education institutions, such as those in the United States (Kuraev, 2016). Kazakhstan has since implemented a reconstruction of its academic infrastructure with a variety of reform programs that increasingly distinguish its academic policies and structure from the older education systems of neighboring countries. For the purposes of this thesis, this section will discuss two consecutive programs responsible for the most extreme changes to Kazakhstan's system of higher education.

Kazakhstan's first program to enable international academic collaboration was titled the State Education Development Program for 2005-2010. This program introduced the more dominant three-cycle structure to higher education to align with the West's structure of Bachelor, Graduate and PhD degree options. This three-cycle design has become the international standard, and the enacted changes in Kazakhstan have enabled Kazakh students to participate internationally in higher education (Massyrova, 2015). An especially notable reform made possible by this program was the adoption of the international "Bologna Process" (Pinov & Pak, 2006). The "Bologna Process" is embodied by the European Higher Education Area, EHEA, a collaborative international group with the same commitment to improving higher education ("European Higher Education Area and Bologna Process"). This international process has helped Kazakhstan bolster its foreign academic positioning through Kazakh student's participation in universities in collaborating countries (Massyrova, 2015). The Bologna Process marked the start of

Kazakhstan's individual contributions to modern higher education and research, as it sent its citizens abroad. It concurrently aided Nazarbayev's ultimate nation-building agenda through the facilitation of competitive education for Kazakh citizens at a time when Kazakhstan could not provide a competitive higher education domestically. It has been an essential program in advancing Kazakh education internationalization.

Another program that has advanced the capabilities of Kazakh higher education is the State Program of Industrial and Innovative Development-2 (SPIID-2) that was launched in 2015. While this program focused on a variety of new policies aimed at increasing the efficiency of Kazakh industry and development, the education component outlined four strategic additions to Kazakhstan's education system, all critical to Nazarbayev's ultimate education goal (Jumakulov, 2019). The SPIID-2 was created to "guarantee stable and well-balanced economic growth by means of diversification and improvement of its competitive ability" (SPFIID, 2010). The SPIID-2 has focused significantly more on the role that education played in economic development and the facilitation of human capital. It has embraced the importance of a knowledge-based economy, as competitive academic capabilities have become increasingly critical through the wider internationalization of education and the new standard of global accessibility (Jumakulov, 2019; Koch, 2014). SPIID-2 responded to the rising academic standards through the advertisement of this program and its emphasis on

"developing collaborative partnerships with leading international universities; creating new postgraduate programs in collaboration with their international university and industry partners; enhancing research and professional capacity of faculty and staff; modernizing facilities and academic infrastructure; and facilitating the employment of SPIID-2 program graduates" (Jumakulov, 2019).

These conditions officially recognize the connection between higher education and the success of industry in Kazakhstan, and SPIID-2 has aimed to provide the necessary resources

domestically for Kazakh students and future industry workers. Furthermore, these advances have increasingly allowed Kazakhstan to compete on an international scale in the academic world, critically at the time of the growing importance of international research collaboration.

Particularly, the Kazakh government wanted to increase the success and recognition of Kazakhstan's research institutions. It has sought to achieve this through its collaboration with other international research institutions, and its development of new domestic research-based institutions (Jumakova, 2019). These actions ultimately boost Kazakhstan's domestic industry development and future GDP by advancing the opportunity for higher education and addressing ingrained academic obstacles.

B. The Creation of Nazarbayev University

One of the most ambitious projects to improve Kazakhstan's internal research capabilities and create a platform of collaboration for international institutions is the construction of a brand-new research-based university, Nazarbayev University (NU). NU is a project initiated by President Nazarbayev with the aim to create a university that directly aligns with the goals of SPIID-2 ("Nazarbayev University at a Glance"). These goals include the advancement of research capabilities, international institutional collaboration, and the improvement of quality in domestic institutions to increase achievements of competitive Kazakh students.

Furthermore, the creation of NU was accompanied by the decrease in number of recipients of the popular government scholarship, the Bolashak Study Abroad Scholarship. This scholarship provides government funds to high achieving students to go abroad for a graduate education and then bring their expertise home to work for a required 5 years in a Kazakh industry (Koch, 2014). Surveys of the student population in Kazakhstan reveal that many who

received the Bolashak Scholarship have failed to return to Kazakhstan (Koch, 2014). The Kazakh government established that NU would be a better opportunity for Kazakh students to gain expertise while remaining inside Kazakhstan. By providing a competitive education domestically, Kazakhstan can more directly guarantee that its brightest students remain in Kazakhstan and contribute as human capital to advance Kazakh industry. The decreased amount of Bolashak scholarships may decrease the number of Kazakh students that study in participating Western countries, but the advancement of domestic academic accomplishments will help to motivate Kazakh students to pursue domestic higher education and ultimately help Kazakhstan become more competitive globally.

Nazarbayev developed this university as a way to diminish the differences between foreign higher education and higher education in Kazakhstan. The University was also designed to be a subject of pride for the Kazakh citizens, as one of NU's core principles is a "love of country" (Koch, 2014; "Nazarbayev University at a Glance"). One of Nazarbayev's overarching goals in Kazakhstan has been the promotion of Kazakh nationalism, and this new university in the country's capital elicits national pride because of its impressive architecture and accessibility to resources. Another accomplishment of increased nationalism is a greater pride in Kazakhstan individually, helping de-Sovietisation domestically. Nazarbayev University has a number of strategic partnerships with international institutions such as Duke University, University of Wisconsin, and University of Cambridge, which are all heavily advertised on the NU's home website ("Nazarbayev University at a Glance"). NU, as a modern research institution, is important to Kazakhstan's domestic progress and international recognition, as it completely embraces the concept of academic internationalization (Li, 2018).

In addition to its new buildings and research laboratories, Nazarbayev University invests a large amount of funds to attract Western scholars as faculty. Western scholars are brought in to teach the future generation of Kazakh industry workers, academics, and politicians. These professors are given high salaries, relaxed schedules, and do not have to learn the Kazakh language, as all classes at NU are taught in English (Koch, 2014). The language of instruction is yet another revolutionary aspect of this new University, as it is a factor aiming to advance the goal of national trilingual ability (Nazarbayev, 2017).

Overall, Kazakhstan has undergone enormous reforms to the structure and design of NU and its other higher education institutions. These reforms and new constructions seek to expand industry potential and streamline education by investing in the growth of human capital. Such reforms incorporate international features of education and research. Through collaboration and strategic partnership, Kazakhstan continues to apply these changes in domestic universities to try and decrease the risk of losing accomplished students to foreign institutions and lifestyles.

III. International Academic Partnerships

While Kazakhstan's recent domestic reforms are more focused inwards on Kazakhstan's institutions' quality and their ability to match international standards, the need for international educational collaboration is also an area that Nazarbayev has sought to expand. International partnerships in higher education are important because of the connection between international education and country collaboration. By rapidly expanding the economic, political, and diplomatic capabilities of Kazakhstan, internationalization of higher education advances the goals of the Kazakh government. Attending a higher institution abroad allows students to diversify their knowledge and distinguish their studies through the achievement of an

international perspective with cross-cultural experiences and cooperation. The emphasis of the Kazakh government on gaining these skills has led to a large number of Kazakh students studying abroad and pursuing a graduate degree outside of the country, as they are able to attend prestigious schools with the help of government and institutional funding. Various factors of the Kazakh higher education system actually make it more attractive to complete degrees abroad.

The domestic universities can only support fifty percent of industry demands, as there is an insufficient number of academies to educate teachers and professors to the standards required by SPIID-2. This is causing Nazarbayev University to outsource from other countries for a majority of its faculty (Massyrova, 2015; Koch, 2014). Furthermore, higher education in Kazakhstan is only free for around ten percent of students by way of merit-scholarships. The other students are required to pay 18,000 dollars for tuition, almost double that of Kazakhstan's GDP per capita in 2018, thus rendering many potential university students incapable of studying at Kazakh Universities (Koch, 2014; "GDP per Capita [Current US\$]- Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyz Republic, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan"). The government provides a variety of opportunities for Kazakh students to receive funding to pursue an academic degree internationally.

A. Kazakh Students Abroad

In 2015, 66,623 Kazakh students were enrolled in higher education abroad. Nazarbayev has placed an emphasis on education abroad since independence, and despite the advancement of domestic higher institutions, the already large number of Kazakh students in international institutions continues to grow.

The majority of international education opportunities are provided by the Kazakh Ministry of Education and Science (MoES), through facilitation of mutual exchanges with a variety of

countries to provide the opportunity for international students to come and study in Kazakhstan (Karimova, 2006). Scholarships from the Kazakh government, international educational institutions, and foreign governments are widely available and promote the international education of Kazakh students as well (Karimova, 2006). Despite these opportunities that may provide an opportunity for a more competitive education, Kazakhstan focuses their efforts on promoting domestic higher education for Kazakh students in an effort to keep their most talented students within the country (Koch, 2014).

The most significant scholarship enabling Kazakh students to receive an education abroad is the Bolashak Scholarship. It was developed in 1993 and has sent around 3,000 students abroad every year (“История Программы ‘Болашак’” [Istorija Programmy ‘Bolashak’; “History of the ‘Bolashak’ Program”]). The number of students wanting to participate continues to grow as well as the number of cooperating institutions. This scholarship is seen as a critical aspect of higher education development, as the participating students are able to improve their quality of education and contribute to the Kazakh workforce more effectively. Thus, it is in line with the overarching goal of the Kazakh government to develop a knowledge based economy that can adapt to international standards; students ideally return with a refined education and international experience. This has the potential to change with the decreasing number of open Bolashak scholarships for Kazakhs students.

There are a wide variety of countries that collaborate with the MoES, but the highest percentage of Kazakh students study in Russia or other Central Asian countries to further their education. Recently, however, there has been a large movement of students going to China, Europe and the United States to receive a degree of higher education. This more recent interest in going to the East and West of Kazakhstan instead reflects the widening of Kazakhstan’s overall

foreign collaboration, which is also reflected in its economic and international leadership. The rapidly increasing international collaboration of Kazakhstan, discussed in the previous chapters, has progressively created greater opportunities for international education. With the increase of globalization and the expansion of Kazakhstan's reach, non-Russian education options are growing in popularity ("Outbound Mobility from Kazakhstan up 140% over Past Decade").

B. China's Role in Kazakhstan's Educational Reform

China provides an example of where Kazakhstan has collaborated most heavily with academic partners outside of Russia. China has one of the most comprehensive higher education systems in the world and constantly seeks to gain international recognition for its higher educational achievements, prestige, and research innovation (Serikkaliyeva, 2019). China's ambitious goals are well known throughout Kazakhstan due to the growing collaboration of the two countries, and Kazakh students have been increasingly attracted to the opportunity of receiving a higher education from one of the prestigious Chinese academic institutions. Furthermore, the cost of a higher education in China is inexpensive and manageable for many Kazakh students (Sadovskaya, 2013). In 2015, more than 13,000 Kazakh students left to study in China, compared to the 20 Kazakhstani students that studied in China in the 2003/2004 school year. This expansion reflects a large movement of the students to China who - in the past - would typically have stayed in Central Asia or Russia ("Outbound Mobility from Kazakhstan up 140% over Past Decade"). In addition to the lower cost of an education in China, various grants are available through the SCO, enabling even more Kazakh students to receive a competitive education despite potential financial problems. Research even states that China has sought to specifically attract Kazakh students to their institutions (Serikkaliyeva, 2019).

An important aspect of this academic diaspora is the influence that living in China has on the future generations of Kazakhstan. While there is survey research that suggests Kazakh citizens are suspicious of the more recent Sino-Kazakh diplomatic collaboration, this academic change has the potential to influence the public opinion of Kazakh citizens through soft diplomacy power (Koch, 2013). Soft power is the idea that a country's government can accomplish positive international diplomacy through collaboration and persuasion with/of a country instead of through force (Nye, 2019). Due to the current hesitations regarding the Sino-Kazakh economic relationship from the Kazakh citizenry, China stands to benefit from the increase of Kazakh students and their subsequent positive experiences in China; ideally achieved by gaining more Kazakh students in its educational system (Serikkaliyeva, 2019).

Kazakhstan's soft-power collaboration with China provides more depth to an already developed economic partnership. These cross-border cooperation's are especially important for creating a mutual trust between the citizens of both countries. Despite the top-down partnership of the Sino-Kazakh leadership, the new relationship still has a long way to go before it can rival that of the deep-rooted Russo-Kazakh historical relationship in culture, language and experience. A more in-depth partnership between China and Kazakhstan will grant Kazakhstan greater sovereignty through expanded cultural diversity within Kazakhstan and the consequential de-Sovietisation that may occur.

C. Western Academic Collaboration with Kazakhstan

Soft power is a large factor of Kazakh students studying abroad and international students coming into Kazakhstan. International collaboration is seen as a critical pathway for developing positive relations between two countries through the socialization of the younger generations (*Fulbright Student Program - About*). Kazakhstan also collaborates with the West in various

academic settings. A method by which this international collaboration with the West is pursued is through cross-cultural programs such as the Fulbright, Princeton in Asia, and a variety of other similar programs that fund students and academics to travel to Kazakhstan and other participating countries for research and cultural immersion programs.

Another critical demonstration of rising Kazakh relevance in the international community and international soft power efforts can be seen by the growth of the United States Fulbright program in Kazakhstan. The United States Fulbright Program is of special importance in creating positive cooperation between US and Kazakh students through the presence of US students in various cities in Kazakhstan. Fulbright scholars conduct research projects and teach English while working in American Corners: regional resource centers created by the United States Department of State to educate locals about American culture (“American Corners”). U.S Fulbright scholars conduct projects and integrate themselves with the community, serving to advance the English fluency goal of Kazakhstan (Nazarbayev, 2017). Kazakhstan has collaborated with the United States to advance the available Fulbright positions in Kazakhstan over the past fifteen years to increase the amount of English teaching faculty and promote positive soft diplomacy between the two countries (“Kazakhstan”). With the increased number of positions, there is a greater possibility for positive relationships to develop between Kazakh and American citizens. The global rate of student mobility has exponentially grown in the 21st century and consequently has advanced similar soft power motivated programs all over the world (Li, 2018).

Given the distinct difference in life and culture between Kazakhstan and the United States, the Fulbright is an especially good program for both countries, as a mutual understanding and friendship can be created through the high volume of inevitable interactions a Fulbright

participant has. The Fulbright is only one of the US-Kazakh academic programs, but it, along with many other similar programs such as Princeton in Asia, provide a positive opportunity for Kazakhstan to continue de-Sovietisation. These exchange programs help with de-Sovietisation through increased engagement of Kazakh citizens with international citizens, specifically from the West, as greater international engagement offsets the traditional heavy influence of Russians in Kazakhstan. Through participation in programs such as these, Kazakhstan is able to take part in and contribute to the global sharing of cultural identity and collaboration, ultimately aiding Nazarbayev's stated goal of greater international academic integration (Li, 2018).

IV. Conclusion

Kazakhstan's reform of its higher educational infrastructure and efforts to participate in the global internationalization of education have enabled it to begin to increase its human capital domestically. Through raising the intellectual standards of its citizens, Kazakhstan will be able to strengthen its workforce, industrial productivity, and innovation. This progress can already be seen in the example of Nazarbayev University, where the recognition of improving university quality is identified and pursued. These efforts have enabled Kazakhstan to continue its outward-focused foreign policy and subsequently achieve more sovereignty from remaining Soviet influence. Kazakhstan has ultimately used higher education as one of the primary areas for de-Sovietisation as the country employs new international measures domestically and new methods of international academic collaboration (Kissane, 2005). Along with Kazakhstan's national trilingual goal, Kazakh students are gaining the ability to participate and engage competitively on an international scale. Thus, education reform greatly contributing to Kazakhstan's successes in developing a more educated civilian population, and Kazakhstan will continue to employ these

strategies through the continuous growth of its academic resources, research capabilities and educational opportunities.

While Kazakhstan still motivates many students to pursue a competitive education internationally, the significant efforts of the Kazakh government to revamp the higher education institutions reflect the likelihood that in the future, Kazakhstan has a genuine chance to reach its ultimate goals. Nazarbayev University is an integral step towards this achievement and will serve as an example for the ongoing university reforms.

Chapter Five: The Emergence of an Independent Kazakhstan

“Sovereignty is not given, it is taken.”

- Mustafa Kemal Atatürk

I. Introduction

This chapter discusses the findings of this thesis and applies them to Kazakhstan’s future trajectory and potential to accomplish goals outlined in the Kazakhstan 2050 Strategy. Additionally, I examine the United States’ policy and interests in the area and make recommendations about how to apply the findings in this thesis to future US involvement. Lastly, I discuss possible topics for future research on the subject of Kazakhstan’s modernization and sovereignty.

II. Summary of Findings

Each of the main chapters of this thesis covered a critical area of Kazakhstan’s development that supports Kazakhstan’s increasing autonomy and sovereignty from Russia. Chapter Two discussed Kazakhstan’s contributions to the Nunn-Lugar nonproliferation program and its memberships in the UNSC, WTO, and CICA. The Nunn-Lugar nonproliferation program provided Kazakhstan with its first opportunity to affect international security and its advocacy for the project increased Kazakhstan’s international presence. Nazarbayev’s leadership and initiative helped to show investors that Kazakhstan was a dependable country to invest in. Kazakhstan’s recent membership in the UNSC and WTO have further helped advance its reputational security and international engagement, which have both provided Kazakhstan freedom from Russia’s previously dominating influence in the country.

Chapter Three used evidence of the Sino-Kazakh partnership to demonstrate Kazakhstan's advancement of its economic and infrastructural capacity. The Sino-Kazakh partnership has provided Kazakhstan with critical infrastructure that it was unable to develop by itself. The two countries' collaboration continues to expand and is mutually beneficial. Kazakhstan plays a critical role in the advancement of China's Belt and Road initiative and the advancing Sino-Kazakh partnership has enabled Kazakhstan to distance itself from Russia and lessen its dependency on Russian economic aid.

Chapter Four outlined Nazarbayev's reform and increased internationalization of Kazakhstan's higher education system. Kazakhstan's reforms in this area continue to help the country advance its international reputation and increase the number of opportunities available for Kazakh student's to engage in international affairs. The West has also expanded its efforts through academic scholarships that seek to establish soft diplomacy with Kazakh citizens and government. The advancement of the Kazakh higher education system continues to provide Kazakhstan with resources and opportunities to advance its positioning in the international community through academic competition and collaboration. Kazakhstan's international academic cooperation has subsequently aided its relationships with participating countries such as those in the EU and China. This diversification of its engagements contributes to increased de-Sovietisation in Kazakhstan, and further advances its sovereignty as an independent country.

These chapters have discussed the extensive development reforms implemented by Kazakhstan, and through a variety of metrics, each chapter has determined Kazakhstan's success in establishing further sovereignty and geopolitical distance from Russia. The evidence provided amounts to support my argument that Kazakhstan has achieved sovereignty from Russia through strategic foreign policy and engagement.

III. Kazakhstan's Geopolitical Trajectory and Future Research

Throughout his leadership, President Nur Sultan Nazarbayev initiated significant and ambitious reform within Kazakhstan. His progressive initiatives have increased Kazakhstan's international positioning, economic development, and have internationalized higher education. The reforms in these three sectors have fundamentally modernized and advanced Kazakhstan. In February of 2019, Kazakhstan's government underwent a transfer of power where Nazarbayev stepped down and endorsed Kassym-Jomart Tokayev as Kazakhstan's new president. This transfer of power is unprecedented in Kazakhstan. However, Nazarbayev remains active in the background, keeping his legal title of "leader of the nation" and was granted with the newly created title of Honorary Senator (*pochetnovo senatora*) ("Назарбаев Получил Второй Титул За Два Дня"; ["Nazarbayev Received a Second Title in Two Days"]; Higgins, 2019).

Tokayev plans to continue in Nazarbayev's footsteps and has stated that he will not significantly change any policies or do anything to affect Kazakhstan's relationship with Russia or China. However, there is potential for change in the greater Central Asian region (McGlinchey, 2019). Nazarbayev was a president who sought to maintain influence in as many areas as possible through establishment of collaborative organizations and positive relations, which he did with ease as Central Asia's Statesman. The role of Central Asia's Statesman is a highly competitive position. While Nazarbayev was undeniably an exceptionally skilled leader, qualified for the Statesman position, President Tokayev may not have the skills required to establish himself and his country as a leader among the other Central Asian republics, especially given the increasing international engagement of Mirziyoyev, Uzbekistan's new president ("Engel Statement on Kazakhstan Presidential Transition"). This thesis has established

Nazarbayev's critical role as a leader and advocator for Central Asia and it is uncertain if Kazakhstan's leadership in the region will continue or change.

Tokayev will continue to fulfill the goals of Nazarbayev's Kazakhstan 2050 Strategy with the support of the Kazakh Government. The ambitious goal to be among the 30 most developed countries by 2050 is becoming increasingly tangible as a result of the successes outlined in this thesis and the increasing availability of support from Kazakhstan's international partners.

However, the international ranking system for country development, the Human Development Index (HDI), had Kazakhstan positioned as number 58 in 2016 ("Human Development Reports"). The massive advancement that Kazakhstan desires will require continued improvement in international relations and the economic sectors of the country, and also in areas such as civil service and democratic institutions (Janenova & Knox, 2017). While the ability to improve the Kazakh education system will help advance innovation and human capital, the actual governance structures within Kazakhstan require significant reform. Given Kazakhstan's authoritarian history, this will be a distinct challenge due to the tradition of centralized power (Janenova & Knox, 2017).

Kazakhstan has clear-cut goals and strategies in place to achieve these goals. Therefore, it is only a matter of effective execution that will determine if Kazakhstan can surpass 28 countries' development rankings and achieve the ambitious goal of becoming one of the top thirty most developed countries in the world by 2050.

IV. The United States' Interests in Kazakhstan and Central Asia

The United States' interest in Central Asia has fluctuated based on global events. In the 1990s, US involvement in the area was sparse but aimed towards "fostering political stability,

maintaining access to regional markets, ensuring freedom of navigation, and preventing the rise of any hostile hegemony" (Binnendijk, 1996). This drastically changed after September 11, 2001. The terrorist attacks on the United States spurred a vast expansion of US involvement in the Middle East (McCarthy, 2007). The neighboring Central Asian republics served as vital partners to the US in the Americans' combat operation in Afghanistan. The Central Asian republics also allowed US troops access to their territory and air bases to further the military efforts in Afghanistan. This relationship was supported by the mutual interest of both parties to curb extremism in the area (Pihlblad & Tian, 2012).

However, in the mid-2000s, US relations in the area deteriorated as the Republics either disconnected from foreign influence or found more agreeable partnerships with countries such as China and Russia. The United States became a less desirable partner due to the pressure put on Kazakhstan by the United States to democratize and improve various human rights abuses. China and Russia however did not require such changes for their partnerships (McCarthy, 2007). The United States' continued interest in Kazakhstan has more recently been recognized in their efforts to prevent a monopoly of interest by China and Russia. China and Russia's dominance in Kazakhstan has become a more pressing concern because of the increased economic collaboration through the SCO and the Belt and Road Initiative (Pihlblad & Tian, 2012). Furthermore, there was a deteriorating favorability toward the United States, evident from public polls taken in Central Asia in the early 2000s (McCarthy, 2007). The United States continuously tried to curb these sentiments through traditional methods such as economic assistance and occasional public support for their progress. However, the United States was still unable to incite significant improvement of the perception of the United States in Central Asia (Pihlblad & Tian, 2012).

The recent declaration of Nazarbayev to make Kazakhstan a trilingual nation provides a potential opportunity for the United States to increase its influence in the nation (Nazarbayev, 2017). The expanded incorporation of English into Kazakh society and education may increase Kazakhstan's interest in collaboration with English-dominant countries and provide the US with an opportunity to help and provide English educational resources. However, an updated strategy in the region is required. In a meeting on the current developments in Central Asia in the House Committee on International Relations, expert Fredrick Starr discussed the critical points of the US-Central Asian relationship and made policy recommendations for an updated strategy in the region. Starr's recommendations emphasize the importance of recognizing the zone as legitimately and critically important in the world. Additionally, Starr expresses the importance of collaboration in the region both with the governments of each country and the other majorly involved countries in the area, such as Russia and China. This is followed up with a policy suggestion to work collaboratively with each country rather than executing any policy with force. Starr essentially recommends that the United States proceed with caution and avoid any action that might suggest the United States' aggression or control in the area. This is especially important due to the delicate nature of the region and its powerful nuclear neighbors that are trusted partners of Kazakhstan.

A critical acknowledgement that Starr makes is the primary focus of the Central Asian region on maintaining its sovereignty (Starr, 2018). This has previously been established in my thesis and alongside his previously mentioned recommendations, I provide a few additional considerations for the United States' diplomatic efforts in Central Asia, specifically in Kazakhstan.

On the basis of security and human rights, Starr acknowledges that security in the region is most often prioritized over issues of human rights (Starr, 2018). However, there is great potential to negotiate in these areas and utilize Kazakhstan's goals as direction in those negotiations. For example, the United States might offer aid or resources for Kazakhstan's higher education institutions in exchange for potential recognition of human rights by the government. Additionally, there should be attention paid to the research that has established Tokayev as a softer-handed leader than Nazarbayev in human rights (Higgins, 2019). If Tokayev proves to be a more lenient and agreeable president, there will be greater potential in the future to work with him on projects of human rights or democratization in the country. The United States, if able to continue their increasingly positive relationship with the country, could use its positioning as a starting point to establish increased trust and advance US-Kazakh collaboration.

Additionally, the US-Kazakh relationship has the potential for expansion if the United States were to both recognize the legitimate sovereignty of Kazakhstan and engage it in more collaborative projects. Increased engagement could include the continued inclusion of Kazakhstan in current non-proliferation efforts, heightened recognition of its leadership and success in the development of its economy, or further support and facilitation of US-Kazakh higher education collaboration. Given the importance of these issues to Kazakhstan's wider development goals, I believe the United States' support and recognition of its accomplishments would greatly reinforce US-Kazakh collaboration and partnership.

An improved relationship and expanded partnership with Kazakhstan has the potential to greatly benefit the United States. Kazakhstan is located in a strategic location between the United States' two major competitors, China and Russia, and a close relationship with Kazakhstan would improve the ability of the United States to keep up with pressing issues in the area.

Furthermore, a broader partnership with Kazakhstan would ease the ability of the United States' efforts in the rest of Central Asia as a result of the leadership and respect that Kazakhstan holds in the region.

An important factor to consider in the United States' continued efforts in the area is the looming presence and involvement of China and Russia in Kazakhstan. Both have significant investments in the area, and Blank affirms that "Russia and China view any U.S. presence in Central Asia as a type of threat to their virtual interests" (Blank, 2007). While I suggest the increased involvement of the United States in Kazakhstan's various projects of development, it is essential that the strategy be implemented with caution as to not aggressively encroach on Russian or Chinese interests.

V. Areas for Future Research

This thesis studies the effects of Kazakhstan's foreign policy and engagement on Kazakhstan's sovereignty from Russia. It does not address in detail the domestic sectors that have a potential to further affect and establish Kazakh independence. Further research into the effects of Kazakhstan's domestic sectors could provide new information about how domestic trends affect a country's international cooperation and sovereignty. Additionally, while the thesis addresses the important role that China plays in Kazakhstan's ability to diversify its partnerships, there is great potential to go further in depth in the effects of the Sino-Kazakh relationship on domestic politics and civil society in Kazakhstan. The increased presence of China in Kazakh affairs is likely to affect the lives of Kazakh citizens due to China's extensive aid in the development of Kazakhstan's transportation and economic infrastructure. This would be a novel

direction of research, as it will continue to change as Kazakhstan's participation in the international community expands and China's Belt and Road Initiative plan moves forward.

VI. Conclusion

Kazakhstan has emerged from the wreckage of 1991 almost thirty years later as an established country with international influence. The profound reform that Kazakhstan has undergone is largely due to the leadership and strategy of President Nur-Sultan Nazarbayev. As of 2019, his official international legacy has come to an end, but there is considerable evidence of his achievements. Kazakhstan's previous membership in the Soviet Union has shaped Kazakhstan's institutions and international reputation. However, this thesis establishes that, as a result of Kazakhstan's reforms and Nazarbayev's strategic foreign policy, the country is now recognized in diplomatic leadership, prepared with rapidly improving economic infrastructure, and is ready to continue revolutionizing its higher education system. These accomplishments in such critical areas of development have helped Kazakhstan to increase its sovereignty from Russia's dominating sphere of influence, thus gaining a respected position as an independent contributor to the international community.

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