

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF KAZAKH MILITARY COOPERATION  
WITH THE UNITED STATES, THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,  
AND THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

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by

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## ABSTRACT

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF KAZAKH MILITARY COOPERATION WITH THE UNITED STATES, THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AND THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA, by Lieutenant Colonel Rauf Nauruzbayev, 86 pages.

Given its geopolitical location between the East and the West, the Republic of Kazakhstan has become a subject for competing influences and interests between the Russian Federation, the People's Republic of China, and the United States of America, which are trying to achieve their national security objectives along the "Silk Road" These potential foes struggle with each other in multiple arenas. It is among the immense gravitational pull of these powers that the Republic of Kazakhstan performs an intricate dance. That is why the Kazakh Republic employs the multi-vector national strategy to balance interactions with these powers in attempts to remain neutral and balanced, mitigating the risk of machinations. The researcher illustrates this policy as he focuses on comparisons of Kazakh military cooperation with each nation state. It is through this lens that the author describes and provides recommendations for political leaders to preserve the multi-vector Strategy. Noting the success of other endeavors, the author ultimately recommends the establishment of a joint multi-national anti-terrorism unit under the command of Kazakh forces in order to tackle and find the effective solutions for this global issue within the region, leveraging the expertise and capabilities of the three global powers.

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## ACRONYMS

CENTRASBAT	The Central Asian Battalion
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
CSTO	Collective Security Treaty Organization
DoD	Department of Defense
FMF	Foreign Military Financing Program
US FORSCOM	United States Army Forces Command
IMET	International Military Education and Training Program
KAZBAT	Kazakhstan Battalion
KAZCENT	Kazakh Partnership for Peace Training Centre
MoD	Ministry of Defense
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
SCO	Shanghai Cooperation Organization
SREB	Silk Road Economic Belt
US CENTCOM	United States Central Command
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

I am convinced that the future Kazakhstan is the Universal Labour Society. This is a state with a strong economy, where everything is done for the people. Where there is the best education, the best healthcare. Where peace and tranquility reign. Where citizens are free and equal, and power is fair. Where there is the rule of law.

—Nursultan Nazarbayev, *Address of the Head of State to the people of Kazakhstan*

Right, as the world goes, is only in question between equals in power, while the strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must.

—Thucydides, *The History of the Peloponnesian War*

#### Background

After the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) collapsed, the Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic became the last Soviet republic, declaring its independence on December 16, 1991. Along with creating a newly independent country—the Republic of Kazakhstan—a new era in Kazakh history had begun. From the beginning, the recently independent republic faced new global challenges, where the nation's unity, sovereignty, and territorial integrity became the main priorities. Additionally, the Soviet legacy left an indelible mark in the Republic's being by leaving many problems in political, economic, and social aspects.

Currently, more than one hundred ethnic groups have lived in peace, unanimity, and stability since independence was achieved, a feat that almost no other former Soviet Union state has accomplished. Beginning as a mostly rural country with a small but politically powerful urban elite, Kazakhstan has become a large and growing middle-

class state with a developing economy, stable political situation, and professional armed forces.<sup>1</sup>

All these achievements could not have happened without a successful foreign policy conducted by the First President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Nation's Leader—Elbasi Nursultan Nazarbayev. Since the beginning of his administration, Nazarbayev has emphasized the different countries and regions, the geopolitical situation and status of Kazakhstan, the multivector foreign policy and role of the new republic, and the need to integrate into the global economy and security.<sup>2</sup> By following this strategy and skillful diplomacy led by Nazarbayev, Kazakhstan has established and maintained good relations with the region's largest great external powers and multinational institutions. For over a decade, Kazakh officials have sought to strengthen ties between the Central Asian countries and the Caspian Basin region—areas that define Kazakhstan's "extended neighborhood."<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, the present security situation in the Republic of Kazakhstan attracts multinational investment from all over the world, which implicitly leads to prosperity and future national well-being.

One of the most positive and favorable achievements for Kazakhstan on the world stage is the maintenance of a balanced relationship between the three most powerful

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<sup>1</sup> Richard Weitz, *Kazakhstan and the New International Politics of Eurasia* (Washington, DC: Central Asia-Caucasus Institute and Silk Road Studies Program, 2008), 1.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Ambrosio and William A. Lange, "Mapping Kazakhstan's Geopolitical Code: An Analysis of Nazarbayev's Presidential Addresses, 1997-2014," *Eurasian Geography and Economics* 55, no. 5 (March 2014): 537-559, accessed February 1, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15387216.2015.1024272>.

<sup>3</sup> Weitz, "Kazakhstan and the New International Politics of Eurasia," 5.

countries in the world: the United States of America, the Russian Federation, and the People's Republic of China. Notwithstanding, all three countries have an adversarial relationship and different national interests in Middle Asia, Kazakhstan has maintained strong relations with all of them. From the strategic point of view, it is challenging to adjust Kazakh international policy to maintain these relations and still pursue its national interests at the same time. Because all three global powers seek stability in Middle Asia, having Kazakhstan as a stable state is a crucial factor for security and to guarantee peace and stability. As the recently elected President of the Republic of Kazakhstan Kassym-Jomart Tokayev stated, "Under my leadership, Kazakhstan will continue the constructive, balanced, and independent foreign policy we have followed so successfully over the last three decades."<sup>4</sup> From this perspective, Kazakhstan needs to maintain a balance that will be best suited to achieve national security objectives; one of the most vital objectives is military cooperation with the most authoritative international states.

### The Research Purpose

The Republic of Kazakhstan is the largest country in Central Asia. Its strategic location in the crossroads of Eurasia, an abundance of natural resources, as well as friendly relations with neighboring countries, make it a unique and potentially valuable subject for research.

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<sup>4</sup> Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, "Kazakhstan will Continue Championing Dialogue and Cooperation," September 20, 2019, accessed February 3, 2020, <https://thehill.com/blogs/congress-blog/foreign-policy/462222-kazakhstan-will-continue-championing-dialogue-and>.

One of the main objectives of this research is to identify the extent of geopolitical interests of the above-mentioned global powers towards Kazakhstan in the context of Kazakh national interests through a comparative approach and analysis. The author contends that due to the sensitivities of global and regional geopolitics and the country's strategic location, Kazakhstan needs to identify the most viable aspects of military cooperation with all three global players to maintain its balanced approach.

### The Research Question

The primary thesis question and the supporting questions lead to identifying the most beneficial future course of action for the Kazakh government in terms of military cooperation. The primary research question is: How can Kazakhstan best balance militarily and geopolitically between the three most powerful countries in the world to achieve national security objectives?

The secondary questions, which support and clarify the primary thesis question, are: What is the present state of military cooperation between Kazakhstan, the United States of America, the Russian Federation, and the People's Republic of China? What national security benefits does Kazakhstan gain from military cooperation with each of these three countries?

### Definitions

This section addressed the terminology used by the researcher throughout this research and the thesis. Terminology is consistent with the standard definitions to ensure consistency and avoid misunderstandings as the study progresses through the research topic.

CENTRASBAT. The Central Asian Battalion series of exercises is designed to improve interaction with the Central Asian States by focusing on peacekeeping, humanitarian operations, and exercising command, control, and logistics within a multinational framework. CENTRASBAT is conducted in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan. Other participating nations include Russia, Ukraine, Turkey, United Kingdom, Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Mongolia.<sup>5</sup>

Elbasi. Head of state.<sup>6</sup>

KAZBAT. Peacekeeping military unit of Kazakh Air Assault Forces in the Armed Forces of the Republic Kazakhstan.

STEPPE EAGLE. An annual, multi-lateral exercise sponsored the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and executed by US Central Command. The location of the training rotates yearly to provide American partner nations the chance to enhance interoperability.<sup>7</sup>

Tusau Kesu. “Cutting the Rope.” The old tradition and significant occasion in the family. Because the first steps in life are considered to be very important in Kazakh

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<sup>5</sup> Global Security, “CENTRASBAT,” 2019, accessed April 12, 2020, <https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/centrasbat.htm>.

<sup>6</sup> *Glosbe*, s.v. “Елбасы [head of state],” n.p., accessed December 14, 2019, <https://en.glosbe.com/kk/en/%D0%95%D0%BB%D0%B1%D0%B0%D1%81%D1%8B>. Glosbe is a Kazakh-English Dictionary.

<sup>7</sup> US Army Central, “Exercise STEPPE EAGLE,” n.d., accessed May 3, 2020, <https://www.usarcent.army.mil/Steppe-Eagle/>.

culture and symbolically mean that child will finally be able to walk, and after that, he will be free and gracious.<sup>8</sup>

Union of Soviet Socialist Republic. Former northern Eurasian country (1917/22–1991) stretching from the Baltic and Black seas to the Pacific Ocean and, in its final years, consisting of fifteen Soviet Socialist Republics (SSR): Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belorussia (now Belarus), Estonia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldavia (now Moldova), Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan. The capital was Moscow, then and now the capital of Russia.<sup>9</sup>

### Limitations

The period available for the research is the primary constraint. Existing analyses and formal studies that provide the most accurate and least biased data take time to produce. Also, these studies are not always publicly available and could be restricted or classified.

The author restricted his research to comparative analysis of Kazakh military cooperation that occurred in a post-Soviet period by relevant subject matter experts, academic, and legislative authorities. Also, the author limited research to military cooperation, leveraging a variety of different sources to avoid potential bias.

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<sup>8</sup> Akhambir, “‘Tusau Kesu’ or ‘Cutting the Rope,’” *Peculiar Cultural Traditions*, February 9, 2014, accessed May 3, 2020, <https://peculiarculturaltraditions.wordpress.com/2014/02/09/tesau-kesu-or-cutting-the-rope>.

<sup>9</sup> *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 2018, accessed December 14, 2019, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Russia>.



### Scope and Delimitations

This research focused only on military cooperation by comparatively analyzing past and present conditions between states. The study incorporated three key players in the global stage: The United States of America, the Russian Federation, the People's Republic of China. The three mentioned countries have made a significant impact on the development of Kazakh armed forces by continuously maintaining military cooperation. The research was limited by using only official sources, governmental publications, historical facts, scientific, and academic research.

### Summary

This study analyzes Kazakh military cooperation and provides a better understanding of the future course of action for the Kazakh authorities in terms of military cooperation with the United States of America, the Russian Federation, and the People's Republic of China which would be beneficial in the achievement of national security objectives. The first chapter of the study set the stage into the problem. The primary and secondary research questions lead to the following sections. In spite of the limited scope of qualitative research across a comparative analysis of military cooperation, the author believes that a qualitative examination will produce sufficient meaningful data to promote further study and discussion for an academically appropriate conclusion.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### Introduction

This chapter reviewed a variety of sources used in support of the thesis. The structure of this chapter consists of three separate sections, with each section being related to a specific country. The author provided a short overview of each part based on historical facts and the present situation. In addition, each section provided an analysis as to the extent of military cooperation as well as the existing geopolitical interests of the previously mentioned global powers towards Kazakhstan. This chapter finished by identifying critical gaps in order to develop a recommendation for a future course of action.

#### Background

Over the past three decades, the Republic of Kazakhstan has successfully pursued a constructive, balanced, and independent foreign policy. The national interests of the Kazakh state can be specified to consist of aspirations and required incentives that would facilitate the nation's policies. These policies serve to increase domestic power in all its main components, due to the needs of survival, security, and development of the country itself. They also reflect the values of the historical and cultural heritage and are direct reflections of the Kazakh way of life.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Chintas Utyarov, "Геополитика как фактор обеспечения национальной безопасности Республики Казахстана [Geopolitics as a factor in ensuring national security of the Republic of Kazakhstan]," Bulletin of KazNPU, 2010, accessed February 15, 2020, <https://articlekz.com/article/11054>.

Kazakhstan itself is a hub connecting the East and West due to its unique and, at the same time, risky geographical position with many transcontinental routes, including the ancient “Silk Road.” It also territorially borders the Russian Federation and the People’s Republic of China, which have had historical conflicts with each other, and in turn, are both potential adversaries for the United States. The latter factor is critical and may become a vulnerability in matters of the Kazakh state’s military cooperation, foreign policy, and national security in general.

One of the most critical aspects and of paramount national interest to the country is the creation of a foundation leading to the establishment of military-strategic self-sufficiency for Kazakhstan. In this regard, maintaining the right military-political course aimed at the most influential world powers is essential. The Armed Forces of the Republic of Kazakhstan must be capable of ensuring the country’s security against threats of a regional scale and, at the same time, defend the economic and societal assets of the state. As a result, Kazakhstan needs to maintain and continue its balancing strategy in the international arena. To further these aims, Kazakhstan can only rely on its own forces. Not only must the Kazakh government balance between world powers, it also must balance its internal affairs. This is echoed in its stewardship of diplomatic, intellectual, technological, and financial-economic resources complimenting the unending geopolitical dance between more powerful players while also continuing to pursue its domestic and national interests.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Elena Shukusheva, “Казахстан как геополитический субъект в международных отношениях [Kazakhstan as a geopolitical entity in international relations],” KEU Bulletin: Economics, Philosophy, Pedagogy, Jurisprudence, 2017, accessed February 16, 2020, <https://articlekz.com/article/27756>.

All this is meant to clearly illustrate to the reader that Kazakhstan is of vital importance to the United States, Russia, and China. The reasons for this are as varied as the hues of the ocean and just as ever-changing. Power and influence on, and within Kazakhstan, comes in many flavors, often colliding at the capital. No serious analysis of sources or the position of the state can be made without looking at the problem through this background lens.

No man is an island unto himself, and the same is true of countries. The Kazakh Republic finds itself playing the part of a small city-state caught between established and rising powers worthy of a history written by the famous ancient historians and military general Thucydides. The Republic strides between giants in a never-ending and delicate dance, all the while looking to spread its own wings and achieve some level of strategic independence.<sup>12</sup> But just as Daedalus warned his son not to fly too close to the sun, so too must Kazakhstan be wary or risk the fate of Icarus who flew too close to the sun.<sup>13</sup>

#### Sources Related to Kazakh-American Military Cooperation.

Kazakh-American military cooperation, when compared to that of the Chinese or Russians, is undeveloped and just started several decades ago. Due to this factor, there are not many sources relating to this type of cooperation yet written. During the literature review process, the author evaluated the existing material but believes that scholastic sources are sorely lacking and that institutions must write more documents related to this

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<sup>12</sup> Plato, *The Republic*, accessed March 19, 2020, <http://www.idph.net/conteudos/ebooks/republic.pdf>, 161.

<sup>13</sup> Mythology Wiki, "Icarus," Wikia, 2020, accessed March 19, 2020, <https://mythology.wikia.org/wiki/Icarus>.

particular topic. Most of the associated sources describe the collaboration between Kazakhstan and the United States from a geopolitical perspective rather than focusing on existing military cooperation.

Despite the lack of scholarly sources, the reader should note that the United States has designated the State of Arizona as a partner to the country of Kazakhstan. This partnership began in 1993 not long after the fall of the Soviet Union and has seen the partnership only grow over time. At the moment, the Arizona National Guard conducts regular annual exercises with the Kazakh Military. But, this is only one part of a varied relationship between the United States and Kazakhstan.

Roger N. McDermott, a specialist in Russian and Central Asian defense and security issues, in his article, “United States and NATO Military Cooperation with Kazakhstan: The Need for a New Approach,” gives an analytical overview in Kazakh-American military cooperation. He states that since the beginning of Kazakh independence and construction of Kazakhstan’s armed forces, the United States and other North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) countries have taken an active interest in providing military cooperation intended to support defense capabilities of the newly independent state. Especially after the terrorist attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001, this cooperation had grown because Kazakhstan became a strategic partner within Central Asia in the Global War on Terrorism. The United States and NATO allies have developed a security assistance curriculum with the Kazakh military to further its partnership with the NATO alliance. The main effort is aimed at assisting Kazakhstan to strengthen its defense mechanism capabilities in the Caspian region in order to provide adequate freelance protection for its burgeoning energy interests in the Caspian Sea. As a

result, these cooperation programs became significant challenges for Kazakhstan, which has sought to maximize its gains from American and NATO assistance.<sup>14</sup>

In an article written by a former Kazakh ambassador to the United States, the “Kazakhstan and the United States: Growing Partnership for Security and Prosperity,” the author claims that over the past decade, Kazakhstan and the United States, together, have faced many challenges and built partnerships in key areas such as the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, fighting terrorism, building their economies, resources, and democracy. He concludes his paper, noting that currently the two countries share a wide range of shared values and expressing hopes for a better upcoming future for both countries. He also defined the mutual relationship as a long-term strategic partnership between two states.<sup>15</sup>

An article written by Maxat Kassen, a professor of political science in the Eurasian Humanities Institute, called, “Understanding Foreign Policy Strategies of Kazakhstan: A Case Study of the Landlocked and Transcontinental Country,” provides insights and observations concerning Kazakhstan’s foreign policy to global integration and security-building measures through the prism of understanding the ramifications of Kazakhstan’s unique geopolitical environment at the heart of Eurasia. By using clear examples and embodiments of military cooperation between Kazakhstan and the United

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<sup>14</sup> Roger N. McDermott, “United States and NATO Military Cooperation with Kazakhstan: The Need for a New Approach,” *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 21, no. 4 (December 4, 2008): 615-641, accessed February 24, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13518040802497374>.

<sup>15</sup> Kanat Saudabayev, “Kazakhstan and the United States: Growing Partnership for Security and Prosperity,” *American Foreign Policy Interests* 27, no. 3 (July 2005): 1, accessed February 18, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10803920590970188>.

States, this paper promotes a deeper understanding of the future foreign policy direction.<sup>16</sup>

The Chatham House report, *Kazakhstan: Tested by Transition*, suggested that Kazakhstan has been a useful local partner for many European countries and the United States in Central Asia for many years. Since Kazakhstan became independent, it has actively wanted acceptance and validation from the West and specifically by the United States, which it understands is a geopolitical counterbalance to Russia. American attention has mostly been related by an interest in Kazakhstan's mineral resources and the country's role as a military transit route to Afghanistan for the United States and its allies. Due to these factors, Western countries and institutions in Kazakhstan need to be more active than they have been in recent times. Furthermore, powers attempting to maintain their strategic footholds in Kazakhstan, such as Russia, and growing powers, such as China, have proven more than willing and capable of filling global vacuums as these arise. As a result, the more the Western influence withdraws from cooperation with Kazakhstan, the more others will fill this geopolitical gap in Central Asia.<sup>17</sup>

In the article, "Kazakhstan's Western Rebalancing: The Changing Strategic Contours of Eurasian Connectivity," Professor Michael Tanchum examined Kazakhstan's

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<sup>16</sup> Maxat Kassen, "Understanding Foreign Policy Strategies of Kazakhstan: A Case Study of the Landlocked and Transcontinental Country," *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 31, no. 3-4 (April 2018): 314-343, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09557571.2018.1520809>.

<sup>17</sup> Annette Bohr, Birgit Brauer, Nigel Gould-Davies, Nargis Kassenova, Joanna Lillis, Kate Mallinson, James Nixey, and Dosym Satpayev, *Kazakhstan: Tested by transition* (London, UK: Chatham House, 2019), 6-7, 122, accessed February 25, 2020, <https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/2019-11-27-Kazakhstan-Tested-By-Transition.pdf>.

“multivector” foreign policy from different perspectives. A part of the paper relates to the analysis of recent advances in the Kazakhstan-NATO partnership. It described Kazakh-American military cooperation and how Kazakhstan has contributed to the maintenance of a certain great power equilibrium in the Central Asian region.<sup>18</sup>

The section related to the South and Central Asia Region in the US Department of State *Integrated Country Strategies* article describes key American interests that are undoubtedly beneficial for both parts. The paper highlights that law-enforcement and military links between the United States and Kazakhstan are good and increasing and the American government strives to strengthen these ties in pursuit of mutual security objectives. The report describes several main aspects of cooperation. First of all, the organizational cooperation with law enforcement and security agencies in Kazakhstan have increased significantly. The implementation of a Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty provided the legal framework for augmented collaboration on key American goals, including counter-terrorism, drug trafficking, human trafficking, money laundering, terrorist funding, and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Secondly, Kazakhstan is an active participant in the American-Central Asian diplomatic platform, through which the United States and the other countries of Central Asia cooperate in different aspects. Finally, Kazakhstan is already an important commercial partner for the United States. American companies have invested a significant amount of money in

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<sup>18</sup> Michael Tanchum, “Kazakhstan’s Western Rebalancing: The Changing Strategic Contours of Eurasian Connectivity,” *Journal of Central Asian and Caucasian Studies* 10, no. 20 (2015): 1.



Kazakhstan's world-class oil fields, creating new jobs and providing substantial income to the Kazakh Government as well as to American investors.<sup>19</sup>

Yet another research paper related to Kazakh-American military cooperation, "The Limits of Friendship US Security Cooperation in Central Asia," was written by US Air Force Lieutenant Colonel Michael J. McCarthy. In this paper, the author explores the history of American security cooperation programs in Central Asia from the post-Soviet period to the present time. He has identified five distinct stages of development as those programs seeking to achieve the United States objectives in denuclearization and proliferation prevention, regional cooperation, military reform, and improvement of armed capabilities. The author concludes that the American security cooperation programs have borne positive results, but more efforts should be made in the future. Additionally, the most important aspect that the United States should emphasize in its efforts on Kazakhstan is by actively developing the existing security cooperation programs within the Defense Department and across the US government.<sup>20</sup>

Signed by both states, the most recent memorandum concerning the implementation of a five-year military cooperation plan, "Five-Year Military Cooperation Between the Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Department of Defense of the United States of America 2017-2022," is related to stable and reliable security cooperation relationships of both the United States and Kazakhstan. The

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<sup>19</sup> US Department of State, *Integrated Country Strategies* (Washington, DC: US Department of State, August 2018), 2, accessed March 9, 2020, [https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/ICS-Kazakhstan\\_UNCLASS\\_508.pdf](https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/ICS-Kazakhstan_UNCLASS_508.pdf).

<sup>20</sup> Michael J. McCarthy, *The Limits of Friendship US Security Cooperation in Central Asia: US Security Cooperation in Central Asia*, Walker Paper no. 9 (Maxwell Air Force Base, AL: Air University Press, October 2007), 1-2, 148.

memorandum states, “The DoD and the MOD intend to continue their cooperation toward the further development of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Kazakhstan in the context of a strategic partnership between the United States and Kazakhstan.” The plan related in the memorandum consists of seven sections and covers different areas of military cooperation aimed to further augment the bilateral defense relationship. Every section of that plan is responsible for a specific type of cooperation and states the aim of it.<sup>21</sup>

But the United States is not alone when it comes to attempts at trying to achieve its strategic and regional goals when it comes to Kazakhstan. In fact, since the United States is so far removed from the Republic, its attempts are drawing closer are often overshadowed by those that are far closer politically, geographically, as well as entwined economically. These have great effects on military cooperation as well, with none so great as the influence that Russia has had.

#### Sources Related to Kazakh-Russian Military Cooperation.

Unlike the situation with the United States, Kazakh-Russian military cooperation is based on the legacy of the unified army of the former USSR. This factor still has high impact on the Kazakh Armed Forces currently. There are also many other various factors tying in the Russian Federation, which makes Kazakhstan partially dependent on the

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<sup>21</sup> Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment, *Memorandum of Understanding Between the Department of Defense of the United States of America and the Ministry of Defense of The Republic of Kazakhstan Concerning Implementation of a Five-Year Military Cooperation Plan* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, June 28, 2017).

Russian military-industrial complex. Currently, military cooperation between the two countries is built on various bilateral agreements that are mutually beneficial for both parties.

The Military Doctrine of the Republic of Kazakhstan interprets why Russia might be the closest ally to Kazakhstan and provides better understanding of the cornerstone of present-day partnership. The doctrine explains the main aspects of the country's defense policy and has a specific fragment related to the Russian Federation. This connection is specifically associated with the main actions for the development of a combined missile attack warning system. The specific language highlights "the development of the Unified regional air defense system of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation."<sup>22</sup>

The published article, "What Does Kazakhstan's New Military Doctrine Reveal about Its Relations with Russia?" states that Kazakhstan pursues a multivector foreign policy with its main partners, such as the Kremlin, Beijing, and the European Union. The political ability to balance these affairs permits Kazakh policymakers to demonstrate that they have the political clout to perform more autonomously of Russian influence than other states in the region. Having seen the Russian aggressive actions toward Ukraine since 2014, the Kazakh government started measures to prevent a similar scenario to Ukraine in Kazakhstan. The article also points to the question that the current Kazakh

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<sup>22</sup> Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan, "The Military Doctrine of the Republic of Kazakhstan," no. 554, September 29, 2017, 9, accessed March 28, 2020, <http://adilet.zan.kz/rus/docs/P1700000227>.

doctrine clearly identifies concerning external risk and the vulnerabilities recognized internally with regards to security problems in case of violent movements from Russia.<sup>23</sup>

McDermott wrote another paper related to current research. His report, *Kazakhstan–Russia Enduring Eurasian Defense Partners*, is built on the analysis of dynamics in the multifaceted and evolving defense of Kazakh-Russian security affiliation. The author states that its close defense relations with Moscow may limit Kazakhstan’s cooperation with NATO. Furthermore, contrary to some other experts, he claims that the Russian role in Kazakhstan security does not seem to be declining anytime soon. Additionally, even if Kazakhstan continues the close partnership with NATO, its cooperation with Russia will definitely have priority. The current military doctrine of the Republic of Kazakhstan, existing treaties, defense programs, and its joint military exercises with Russia show that the Kremlin provides security support at a strategic level.<sup>24</sup>

The other McDermott’s paper, “Kazakhstan’s Defense Policy: An Assessment of the Trends,” has also defined the close Kazakh-Russian military cooperation. The author highlights that Kazakhstan has a significant role in the framework of two central security organizations: The Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). This monograph provides related information about

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<sup>23</sup> Deirdre Tynan, “What Does Kazakhstan’s New Military Doctrine Reveal about Its Relations with Russia?” *Eurasianet*, December 7, 2017, accessed March 9, 2020, <https://eurasianet.org/what-does-kazakhstans-new-military-doctrine-reveal-about-its-relations-with-russia>.

<sup>24</sup> Roger N. McDermott, *Kazakhstan–Russia Enduring Eurasian Defense Partners* (Copenhagen, Denmark: Danish Institute for International Studies, 2012), 5, 78-79.

recent historical data for a close partnership with Russia by evaluating different aspects of defense cooperation between the two countries.<sup>25</sup>

The article, “Military-Technical Cooperation of Russia and Kazakhstan: Together, but Diverse,” states that the sphere of bilateral military cooperation between Russia and Kazakhstan has gone through some difficult periods. The author, a professor of Military Sciences of the Russian Federation, Vadim Kozyulin, says that the division of the Soviet military and industrial legacy and the formation of a new model of relations has almost finished. However, relations between the two states are approaching a stage that will determine whether military-economic integration will take place or whether they will retain the form of formal partnership within the framework of the CSTO. In particular, Kazakhstan has several priority areas for cooperation with Russia. They are related to the joint air defense system, automated systems for commanding troops and weapons, as well as improving modern naval forces in the western region. The paper also defines both countries as important partners in the CSTO and the SCO and military cooperation between the two states being mutually beneficial.<sup>26</sup>

The article, “Why Kazakhstan and Russia are Building up Military-Technical Cooperation,” describes Kazakh-Russian military cooperation as natural and predictable. It also points out that both countries are very close to centers of instability in Central Asia

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<sup>25</sup> Roger N. McDermott, *Kazakhstan's Defense Policy: An Assessment of the Trends* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: US Army War College, 2009), 39-41.

<sup>26</sup> Vadim Kozyulin, “Военно-техническое сотрудничество России и Казахстана: Вместе, но порознь [Military and technical cooperation between Russia and Kazakhstan: Together, but the downside],” *Kazakhstan in Global Processes*, May 2014, 75, accessed March 11, 2020, [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/303862599\\_voenno-tehnicheskoe\\_sotrudnicestvo\\_rossii\\_i\\_kazahstana\\_vmeste\\_no\\_porozn](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/303862599_voenno-tehnicheskoe_sotrudnicestvo_rossii_i_kazahstana_vmeste_no_porozn).

and the Middle East. The security agreements between the countries create long-term legal and industrial-technological foundations for the joint strengthening of security. The publication succinctly evaluates the strategic partnership program of Kazakhstan and Russia in the military field, looking at the years 2019-2021 and shows a wide range of interactions in the areas of military-technical cooperation, joint exercises, and training of military personnel.<sup>27</sup>

The dissertation, “Russian-Kazakh Military-Political Cooperation in the Post-Soviet Period and the Prospects for Security in Central Asia,” raises the multidimensional topic of defense cooperation between Kazakhstan and Russia while addressing security issues in Central Asia. The author, Candidate of Historical Sciences, Andrey Grozin, analyzes the compliance of the multivector defense policy of Kazakhstan at the strategic level focusing on Kazakh-Russian military-political and military-technical cooperation, but within the context of an increasingly complicated geopolitical situation. He also expresses the opinion that, for various objective reasons, Russia can become a full-fledged ally of Kazakhstan in the field of defense partnership.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Alexander Khrolenko, “Для чего Казахстан и Россия наращивают военно-техническое сотрудничество [For what Kazakhstan and Russia increase military-technical cooperation],” *Sputnik*, January 24, 2019, accessed March 11, 2020, <https://tj.sputniknews.ru/columnists/20190124/1028069518/kazakhstan-russia-narashchivayut-voenno-tehnicheskoe-sotrudnichestvo.html>.

<sup>28</sup> Andrey Grozin, “Российско-казахстанское военно-политическое сотрудничество в постсоветский период и перспективы безопасности Центральной Азии [Russian-Kazakh military-political cooperation in the post-Soviet period and prospects for security in Central Asia],” *Domestic History*, 2009, 1-2, 26, accessed March 12, 2020, <https://www.dissercat.com/content/rossiisko-kazakhstanskoe-voenno-politicheskoe-sotrudnichestvo-v-postsovetskii-period-i-persp>.

Another Candidate of Historical Sciences, Margarita Shobyenkova, also wrote a paper related to the current research topic. The dissertation, “International Aspects of Russian-Kazakhstan Cooperation in the Field of Collective Security (1991-2005),” explores the historical reasons for creating an international collective security system for the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), including Russia and Kazakhstan. It provides in-depth analysis of the global significance and activities of the CSTO. Besides this, it considers the primary forms and directions of military-technical cooperation between the two countries. The publication also contains material and sound scientific proposals for further independent research on issues related to Kazakh-Russian military cooperation.<sup>29</sup>

The article, “Kazakhstan’s Strategic and Military Relations with Russia,” overviews the Russian military strategy in Central Asia. The author, Dr. Richard Rousseau, explains an interrelationship of historical and cultural legacy in both countries with current Kazakh security policies. He also highlighted the point that through the numerous agreements which regulate defense interaction, Moscow has continuously tried to integrate the Kazakh militarily.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Margarita Shobyenkova, “Международные аспекты российско-казахстанского сотрудничества в сфере коллективной безопасности (1991-2005 гг) [International aspects of Russian-Kazakh cooperation in the field of collective security (1991-2005)],” *Domestic History*, 2009, 5-6, 9, accessed March 12, 2020, <https://www.dissercat.com/content/mezhdunarodnye-aspekty-rossiisko-kazakhstanskogo-sotrudnichestva-v-sfere-kollektivnoi-bezopa>.

<sup>30</sup> Richard Rousseau, “Kazakhstan’s Strategic and Military Relations with Russia,” *Diplomatic Courier*, July 2011, accessed March 13, 2020, <https://www.diplomaticcourier.com/posts/kazakhstan-s-strategic-and-military-relations>.

The author has shown all of the above to clearly show the reader the amount of cooperation ongoing. Although not the focus of the paper, it is worth noting that Russian nationalists and hawks may view Kazakhstan as being well within the purview of the “Motherland’s” defense tripwires. As was previously mentioned, Russian actions in Ukraine and Georgia raise the specter of similar actions should Kazakh cooperation with NATO manifest itself as being something more robust.

This is reasonable to many considering the strategic nature of certain Russian assets within the country and is unique to Russia when comparing and contrasting the great powers vying for influence in Kazakhstan. But there is one more power to rival the Eagle and the Bear. The Dragon of China has its own methods and unique draws as well, though not without its own challenges.

#### Sources Related to Kazakh-Chinese Military Cooperation.

Similar to the situation with the United States, Kazakh-Chinese military cooperation is also limited and underdeveloped. In this area of interaction, most reviewed sources strongly connected to geopolitical and economic relations between the two countries. To better understand the situation in military cooperation, the author was required to review broader materials relating to geopolitics. Furthermore, military cooperation between the two countries is mainly based on participation within the framework of the SCO. The literature review focused on the issues associated with security, but from the perspective of the SCO as it related to centralized cooperation.

The article, “Development of China–Kazakhstan Cooperation,” evaluates different phases of Kazak-Chinese cooperation and identifies significant factors that have



facilitated the progress of close links between them. It also describes the role of China in the multivector foreign policy of Kazakhstan and demonstrates significant milestones in expanding bilateral political and economic relations. The paper addresses the current developments in cooperation between China and Kazakhstan, especially as they relate to the Silk Road Economic Belt (SREB) initiative.<sup>31</sup>

Murat Laumulin, a Doctor of Political Sciences, in his publication, “The Shanghai Cooperation Organization as ‘Geopolitical Bluff?’ a View from Astana,” covers different aspects of Kazakh interests related to the SCO. Having evaluated various factors that influence Kazakhstan’s participation in the organization, the author expresses an opinion that Kazakhstan is not gaining any real benefit from its membership in the SCO. He also stresses that the SCO offers more disadvantages than advantages to Kazakhstan.<sup>32</sup>

In contradiction, the article, “Cooperation of the Republic of Kazakhstan within SCO” states, that for Kazakhstan, the SCO looks like an effective regional security organization.

Moreover, Kazakhstan was initially interested in creating such a structure with the participation of Russia and China. In the framework of the country’s multivector foreign

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<sup>31</sup> Zhenis Kembayev, “Development of China-Kazakhstan Cooperation,” *Problems of Post-Communism* (December 13, 2018), accessed March 14, 2020, <https://www.diplomaticourier.com/posts/kazakhstan-s-strategic-and-military-relations>.

<sup>32</sup> Murat Laumulin, “The Shanghai Cooperation Organization as ‘Geopolitical Bluff?’ A View from Astana,” Institut Français des Relations Internationales, July 2006, 3-4, accessed March 15, 2020, <https://www.ifri.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/laumullinenglish.pdf>.

policy and maintaining a balance of power in the region, participation in this organization is beneficial for Kazakhstan.<sup>33</sup>

Another related article, “China Policy Within the Shanghai Cooperation Organization,” talks about the role of China in the SCO. The article reveals the importance of increasing the level of interdependence in the SCO, in which the Chinese can advance their interests in Central Asia. The publication also expresses the opinion that SCO is one of the tools to strengthen Chinese influence in the fields of security, energy, and geopolitics in Central Asia.<sup>34</sup>

This is further explained in the article, “Kazakhstan – China’s Gate to Central Asia,” which says similarly, that the most urgent task for China’s national security is to prevent the strengthening of the influence of Russia and the United States in the Central Asian region. In this regard, China will increase military cooperation with Kazakhstan, which, in turn, occupies a leading position in the area.<sup>35</sup>

As is characteristic of the Chinese, their strategies and methods are often clouded and somewhat obtuse to outsiders. In addition, their approach is measured in periods far longer in duration than what those in the West or Russia may think of. As a result, the

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<sup>33</sup> Nurlan Abduov, “Сотрудничество Республики Казахстан рамках ШОС [Cooperation of the Republic of Kazakhstan within the SCO],” Bulletin of KazNPU, 2010, accessed March 16, 2020, <https://articlekz.com/article/8296>.

<sup>34</sup> Galia Kurmanbaeva, “Политика Китая в рамках ШОС [Chinese Policy within the SCO],” Bulletin of KazNPU, 2017, accessed March 16, 2020, <https://articlekz.com/article/18914>.

<sup>35</sup> Dmitry Popov, “Казахстан – ворота Китая в Центральную Азию [Kazakhstan is the Gateway to China in Central Asia],” Geopolitics, September 2012, accessed March 15, 2020, <https://www.geopolitica.ru/article/kazahstan-vorota-kitaya-v-centralnuyu-aziyu>.

author was unable to find a more robust trove of documents that would provide better insight.

### Conclusion

As the reader has surely noted already, the literature presented as part of this analysis is not without its flaws. This is further hindered by the author's inability to independently work with material originating in English or Chinese. This notwithstanding, it does much to illustrate key takeaways for the reader by the sheer lack of material in certain areas. It also shows how each of the great powers thinks and behaves with regard to the Republic and how Kazakhstan fits into strategic plans.

To be frank, the material that can be brought to bear on Russia is lengthy and well established. This is partially due to the author's ability to curate it more effectively. But it cannot be denied that the material available is far more significant primarily because of the apparent ties between Russian and Kazakhstan, who used to exist in the former Soviet Union. It is far easier to quantify the cooperation between the two countries as a result.

This is less so with regard to the United States and China. Despite the different approaches, with China focusing more on economics, it appears, and the United States having more of an indirect approach to support other regional goals in the area, the result is the same. The author struggled to find additional materials. As such, the reader will note several suppositions throughout the paper. However, the largest issue itself does not emerge from a lack of material from the countries, but from Kazakhstan itself.

### Gaps

In the course of the development of this paper, the author discovered numerous areas that remain elusive in nature that would facilitate a deeper understanding of this research question. The largest of these instances are related to Republic of Kazakhstan's lack of national policies addressing military goals within the sphere of geopolitical competition between superpowers. This is further compounded by a lack of national military policies that specifically identify national or regional adversaries. This, in turn, prevents the coalescence of viable military doctrine that is nested with diplomatic, informational, military, and economic goals.

As a result, it is very difficult to address in greater detail the approaches of some of the superpowers. Using China as one example, their approach is often directly tied between their military and economics. This makes it difficult to narrow the focus of this paper and still cover aspects that will provide the reader a better understanding of the economic impact and how it interrelates with relation to military cooperation between China and Kazakhstan.

The same can be said of the United States, where military cooperation is often viewed through the lens of the campaign in Afghanistan. This makes it very difficult to ascertain those actions that are directly tied to Kazakh military cooperation versus those that are only indirectly related and are a by-product of propping up a support infrastructure. The author does not distinguish these but notes that military cooperation with the United States hinges somewhat on other regional aspects.

A large amount of material at hand, showing cooperation between Russia and the Republic, is a blessing and a curse. Following in the same vein as the United States, it is

often difficult to differentiate between those actions taken by the Russian Federation that are viewed as cooperation between the States, or that stem from a nationalist defense priority. Again here, the author does not differentiate.

### Summary

The goal of the literature review was to organize available sources into orderly sections that will help the reader to identify answers to the research question. This chapter consisted of three sub-sections that covered sources based on country-related information. The number of evaluated sources provides a basic visualization of research and was expanded on in depth, analysis, and quantity in chapter 4. Each short sub-section was designed to study post-Soviet and current military cooperation between Kazakhstan and the three global powers. The author evaluated research areas, regulatory documents, book sections, journal articles, reports, subject matter experts' opinions, and other available and trustful sources of information. From this literature, the fundamental situations, facts, interests, decisions, and conventional approaches of all three countries towards Kazakhstan from military and geopolitical perspectives were shown.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### Introduction

The thesis research question is: How can Kazakhstan best balance militarily between the three most powerful countries in the world to achieve national security objectives? There are also two secondary questions are designed to help answer the primary research question. What is the present state of military cooperation between Kazakhstan, the United States of America, the Russian Federation, and the People's Republic of China? What national security benefits does Kazakhstan gain from military cooperation with each of these three countries?

To answer the primary question, research was designed to conduct in-depth analysis in the area of military cooperation in the post-Soviet period between Kazakhstan and the three above mentioned global powers. Furthermore, due to the direct impact of other factors on military cooperation, the study also touched on issues in the geopolitical sphere.

The research uses qualitative analysis and the answers to the primary and secondary questions are arrived at through content analysis. The author equally evaluated both Western and Eastern sources to avoid any bias and make the study more effective. Additionally, the researcher's personal experience has also affected the method of research. Having had nineteen years of military service in the Armed Forces of the Republic of Kazakhstan and studied in the United States and Europe, the author brings particular knowledge related to the research topic.

### Phases of the Analysis

The researcher examined the ability of Kazakhstan to best balance militarily on the world stage through three different phases. The first phase was divided into three sub-parts, each relating to a particular country under survey. The first subpart examined military cooperation between Kazakhstan and the United States. The second one was related to Kazakh-Russian cooperation. Accordingly, the last sub-part of research studied China.

Having gathered information on military cooperation between Kazakhstan and the three powers, the second phase of the chosen method was the examination of the studied arguments and facts. Thus, the author conducted an independent comparative analysis in the field of military cooperation between Kazakhstan and the three global powers. This phase occurred in chapter 4.

The final stage of this research methodology concluded and summarized the research; this stage resides in chapter 5. It provided the answer to the posed research question and identifies existing gaps in the Kazakh policy related to military balance at the strategical level. This section also develops proposals, recommendations, and guidance, which may help and optimize probable future solutions for achieving Kazakh national security objectives.

### Summary

The suggested research methodology allows for review and analysis of a variety of material related to the topic sources. The primary objective of the proposed method is to organize a phased study of the questions addressed. This division allows for a more detailed review of military cooperation between Kazakhstan and the countries being

studied. Additionally, it partially touches on topics related to geopolitical domains and interests. Finally, the proposed structure led to an answer to the research question and will provide recommendations about homeland security throughout military balancing. This methodology is feasible, suitable, and appropriately achieved its research objectives.



## CHAPTER 4

### ANALYSIS

#### Introduction

In this chapter, the reader is presented with three different lenses with which to view the world as the Kazakh Republic sees it. Of the three major world powers, it is difficult to ascertain who would be the most beneficial military partner. In consideration is not just the prevention of military conflict, but also actions and resources that would lend themselves to regional and national stability for Kazakhstan itself. To better allow the reader to see this, the author presents a brief analysis of military cooperation between the Republic of Kazakhstan, the United States of America, the Russian Federation, and the People's Republic of China.

The collapse of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), and the simultaneous destruction of the entire communist regime, initiated a new and challenging period for many former country-participants. Like a bloated carcass, the remnants of the former Soviet Union were picked over and then cobbled together in attempts to re-establish systems. Slowly, with fits and starts, these disparate groups of people took up their national identities they had been forced to put aside before.

The appearance of these newly formed countries on the world stage could be compared with children who began to take their first shaky independent steps in life without parental supervision. Each uncertain step was taken by these nascent adolescents with such joy and zeal as if seeing the world for the first time. Each successive fall brought some temporary pain, but also knowledge and experience which guided future

steps. Others, slower to recognize and adapt to the new world they found themselves in, lost themselves along the way, never realizing their potential destiny.

Each post-Soviet state has gradually started to follow its predetermined political course. Unique challenges have reared their heads for various reasons, some economic, others are geographic or military. However, more or less, the numerous paths taken have mostly resulted in success. After several decades of independence, some of these nations find themselves firmly on their feet. At the same time, other countries were less prepared for freedom, are still experiencing some.

As one of the republics of the former USSR, Kazakhstan managed to free itself from centuries-old Russian dependence and chose an independent political course. Of course, in the beginning, this period proved to be far from easy as the country strove to overcome its Soviet legacy. But years later, the country managed to prove itself as a leader in the Central Asian region. At this juncture, the Republic of Kazakhstan's achievements in matters of security, socio-economic growth, and international relations is a vivid example for other former Soviet countries.

As written in Article 1 of Section I of the fundamental Kazakh's national law, which determines its social and state structure, the Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan, "The Republic of Kazakhstan proclaims itself as a democratic, secular, legal and social state whose highest values are a person, his life, rights, and freedoms. The fundamental principles of the activity of the Republic are public concord and political stability; economic development for the benefit of all the nation; Kazakhstani patriotism

and resolution of the most critical issues of State affairs by democratic methods including voting by national referendum or in Parliament.”<sup>36</sup>

Following these principles of the country’s values along with a multivector policy have allowed the newly independent Republic to establish itself as a reliable partner.

With the achievement of independence and the collapse of the Soviet military mechanism, international and internal security issues became acute for the country. Being in a short time a self-governing player in the world stage, the state became very vulnerable in the face of international terrorism, transnational crime, possible regional threats. Besides, the potential impact on the establishment of the newly independent and still undeveloped state by the most prevailing global powers could also intimidate its national security. As a result, the Kazakh government had immediately started to focus on aspects of internal and external security. Shortly after independence, the Armed Forces of the Republic of Kazakhstan manifested itself out of the remnants of the Soviet Union and today stand as a reliable guarantor of its state security and has stimulated the nation’s further prosperity.

However, the Republic’s Army is not completely self-sufficient and is beholden to financial constraints. One such example is the Republic’s need to work with other countries to address gaps in training, resources, or other shortfalls. As such, Kazakh authorities continue safeguarding the strategic balance in terms of military cooperation with the most influential world powers.

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<sup>36</sup> Official Site of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, “The Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan,” Section I General Provisions, Article 1, August 30, 1991, accessed March 26, 2020, [https://www.akorda.kz/en/official\\_documents/constitution](https://www.akorda.kz/en/official_documents/constitution).

As the former Defense Minister of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Colonel-General Saken Zhasuzakov, stated, “The Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Kazakhstan carries out international military cooperation in multilateral and bilateral formats. Currently, the partnership with various international and regional security structures been established, which corresponds to the principle of the multivector foreign policy of Kazakhstan and meets the interests of strengthening its national security.”<sup>37</sup>

As a reflection of the above, Kazakhstan is added an active member of several military-political blocs, some of which are inherently adversaries. For example, within the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), Kazakh troops are part of the Collective Rapid Reaction Forces, the Peacekeeping Forces, the Collective Rapid Deployment Forces of the Central Asian Region, as well as the Collective Aviation Forces. The CSTO is a Russian led military alliance that encompasses seven former Soviet Bloc states with several different exercises and engagements ongoing within the region.

Simultaneously, Kazakh forces are actively participating in activities to strengthen its anti-terrorism potential by closely cooperating with the Chinese military as part of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). Though the SCO is involved in multiple areas of strategic interest to member countries, it is undeniable that those areas should

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<sup>37</sup> Red Star, “Надёжный гарант безопасности государства” [Reliable Guarantor of State Security], May 24, 2016, accessed March 26, 2020, <http://archive.redstar.ru/index.php/2011-07-25-15-57-07/item/28972-nadjozhnyj-garant-bezopasnosti-gosudarstva>.

touch on, or effect, military cooperation. With eight nations as members, the SCO held its first ever military exercise in Kazakhstan, followed by others to include China.<sup>38</sup>

Kazakhstan is receiving support from the United States and NATO. It should also be noted that compared with other former Soviet republics in the Central Asian region, Kazakhstan is a leader in the field of military cooperation with the United States. This relationship started long in 2002 when the United States asked assistance related to the war in Afghanistan, and Kazakhstan benefited from this arrangement in many ways. For Kazakhstan, this chosen strategy has many advantages, but also several risks. It is focused on maintaining partnerships based on mutual military-political interests. Adhering to this course, the country continues to successfully balance within the framework of military cooperation between the West and the East, allowing it to achieve its goals.<sup>39</sup>

It is safe to say that the chosen strategy of military balance between the three world powers is one of the most critical factors ensuring the overall national security of Kazakhstan. Given the current geopolitical situation in the world, the future of the Kazakh nation may directly depend on the country's balanced approaches in its political and military cooperation. The specter of armed conflict that has haunted other post-Soviet

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<sup>38</sup> Charles Carlson, "Central Asia: Shanghai Cooperation Organization Makes Military Debut," August 5, 2003, accessed March 28, 2020, <https://www.rferl.org/a/1103974.html>.

<sup>39</sup> Marat Nurgaliev, "Казахстанско-Американское Военное-Политическое Сотрудничество в Контексте Геополитических Интересов США в Центральной Азии [Kazakh-American Military-Political Cooperation in the Context of US Geopolitical Interests in Central Asia]," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, 2 no. 50 (2007): 1, 4-5, accessed March 27, 2020, <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/kazahstansko-amerikanskoe-voenno-politicheskoe-sotrudnichestvo-v-kontekste-geopoliticheskikh-interesov-ssha-v-tsentralnoy-azii/viewer>.

republics is well known and represents a tragic lesson for Kazakhstan. The Russo-Georgian War and Russian military intervention in Ukraine has shown what certain military-political courses could lead to and clearly illustrates the risks that the Republic faces as it wobbles in and out of the major powers gravitational pull.

To be clear, military cooperation is more nuanced than simply Soldiers from different nations training together. It also goes hand in hand with other elements of national power such as diplomacy, information, and economics as well. In the case of Kazakhstan, this is also closely tied to the geopolitics that the three global powers have amongst themselves as well. This tends to have a multisided effect on Kazakh national security with expected increasing effects in the near future.

Having analyzed both positive and negative effects of military cooperation with each discussed country, this study intends to focus on the benefits to Kazakhstan. The identification of those benefits is aimed at adjusting or filling existing gaps in Kazakh domestic and foreign policy. While a journey with no planned terminus may be enjoyable for a period of time, it isn't ideal in the case of a country. It is the fervent hope of the author that this will help Kazak authorities successfully continue the military balancing between great powers, which, in turn, nests with the country's multivector policy strategy.

### Kazakh-American Military Cooperation

Post-Soviet Kazakhstan and the United States have developed a strong and wide-ranging bilateral relationship, including military cooperation. At the beginning of the partnership, the American government assisted Kazakhstan in the removal of nuclear warheads and their supporting infrastructure from its territory. Since 1994, more than a

half-ton of weapons-grade uranium has been transferred to the United States. The Kazakh Armed Forces received financial support from the US Foreign Military Financing Program (FMF), International Military Education and Training Program (IMET), Building Partner Capacity Program, Overseas Humanitarian Disaster, Civic Aid Program, and the Wales Initiative Fund and the Global Peace Operations Initiative.

All of those initiatives were aimed at raising standards in the armed forces of Kazakhstan and promoting the achievement of American interests in the field of military assistance. For example, the FMF program was critical in the establishment of Kazakhstan's first naval base and training center near the strategically important oil-rich Caspian Sea. Another initiative, the IMET program, designed and developed Kazakh interaction protocols when working with NATO partners. The Kazakh military also participates in martial exercises such as Steppe Eagle, Eager Lion, Viking, and Shanti Prayas, which are funded by the United States.

The Republic has been a historically important partner to the United States for quite some time. That partnership formally began as early as in 1993, when the National Guard Bureau, in conjunction with different States, created the States Sponsorship Program. This began with thirteen different States sponsoring thirteen different countries, with Kazakhstan being one of the original countries to sign on. This program now extends to over eighty-one different countries. The State of Arizona has extended its hand, helping provide vital military cooperation in many forms. In addition to the annual Steppe Eagle exercise, Arizona has provided Military Police assistance, Border Guard training, vehicle maintenance support and training, aviation operations training, and critical maintenance, as well as Non-Commissioned Officer training for Kazakh NCOs.

The peacekeeping training and peace support operations that Arizona provides are a valued partnership.<sup>40</sup>

One of the biggest drivers for these programs originated with requests by Central Asian countries to NATO to provide peacekeeping support and training in the wake of the Tajik Civil War, which began in 1992 and ended in 1997. Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan created a multinational peacekeeping force and fought alongside Russian forces. Kazakhstan is estimated to have lost forty-three Soldiers during operations. The three countries put together a proposal in 1995 to form a Commonwealth of Independent States peacekeeping unit. Part of this proposal was a formal request to NATO to provide assistance. USCENTCOM of the United States provided support as part of what became known as the “Partnership for Peace” program. The Central Asian Battalion (CENTRASBAT) unit created benefited as part of this with several exercises in conjunction with US forces though it was later disbanded in 2000. The most visible portions of this partnership took place in joint multinational training that occurred in 1997-98, a large training seminar in 1999, and in 2000. This began as a long-standing process of security assistance to the Republic and also to achieve interoperability with NATO forces.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Department of Emergency and Military Affairs, “Joint Task Force Arizona State Partnership Program,” n.d., accessed March 28, 2020, <https://dema.az.gov/joint-task-force-arizona/state-partnership-program>.

<sup>41</sup> Matthew Stein, “The History of Central Asian Peacekeepers: The Development of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan’s Peacekeeping Units by Fits and Starts,” 2018, The Foreign Military Studies Office, accessed March 30, 2020, <https://community.afmso.org/wg/tradoc-g2/fmso/w/o-e-watch-mobile-edition-v1/23748/the-history-of-central-asian-peacekeepers-the-development-of-kazakhstan-kyrgyzstan-and-tajikistan-s-peacekeeping-units-by-fits-and-starts>; McCarthy, “The Limits of Friendship,” 45-46, 160.



This security assistance continues even today. The Kazakh military established Kazakh Partnership for Peace Training Centre (KAZCENT), which is a training center in Almaty as part of the Republic's participation in the Global Peace Operations Initiative (GPOI), which is a US military assistance program. The center has been in extensive use since 2009 and has hosted Soldiers from the Kazakhstan battalion (KAZBAT) formed between Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. The main focus of training at KAZCENT has varied but has mainly focused on English terminology in multinational operations, different NATO staff procedures, UN peacekeeping operations overview, legal considerations of UN Peacekeeping Operations, as well as civil and military operation interoperability with North Atlantic Treaty Organization units.<sup>42</sup>

The security assistance provided by the United States is truly a joint and multinational operation involving many partners. Mostly, the cooperation programs between the United States and Kazakhstan are based on a five-year bilateral military cooperation plan. They focus on three key objectives: military interoperability building, military capability in the Caspian Sea region, and general structural military reforms.<sup>43</sup> All three of these goals are clearly within the interest of both parties and have the political support of the governments backing them. This has also been an easy sell for Soldiers of both countries.

In turn, Kazakhstan was also always interested in military cooperation with the American side. For instance, the country immediately declared its readiness to support

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<sup>42</sup> Stein, "The History of Central Asian Peacekeepers."

<sup>43</sup> McDermott, "United States and NATO Military Cooperation with Kazakhstan," 5-8.

the US anti-terrorism campaign in Afghanistan that was announced after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attack. One example of Kazakhstan's contribution to the fight against international terrorism is the provision of an air corridor for US aviation as part of Operation Enduring Freedom. In addition, it should be noted that Kazakhstan became the only country in Central Asia that sent its military contingent to Iraq in 2003. Carrying out the Peacekeeping mission as part of a multinational force, the engineer-sapper squad of KAZBAT neutralized over four million explosive devices. Having thus proved to their American partners their support in the fight against international terrorism, both countries continue to cooperate on military issues successfully.<sup>44</sup>

Furthermore, a stable Kazakhstan with continuous military collaboration strategically benefits the United States. It also has the added effect of degrading excessive Chinese and Russian influence and interests in the Central Asian region. In addition, existing stability is the key to a successful fight against the supply of drugs and international terrorism in general. On the other side, such cooperation is also beneficial for Kazakhstan.

Although the country itself is not interested in elevating one world power over the others as it could lead to a dangerous perceived imbalance, which in turn could threaten the country's national security.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Nurgaliev, "Казахстанско-Американское Военное-Политическое Сотрудничество в Контексте Геополитических Интересов США в Центральной Азии [Kazakh-American Military-Political Cooperation in the Context of US Geopolitical Interests in Central Asia]," 3-4.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 3.

As the former Kazakh ambassador to the United States, Kanat Saudabayev, stated, “Kazakhstan and the United States provide an excellent example of cooperation to ensure security and prosperity for themselves and the world.” Furthermore, Saudabayev mentioned, that in the prevailing situation, collaboration must be expanded and developed. Both countries have together faced different challenges over the last several decades. They have established affiliation in relevant fields such as the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, the development of their economies, energy, and the fighting against terrorism and strengthening of democratic ideas. The success of Kazakhstan is in the United States’ best interest. Ambassador Saudabayev emphasized that this is going to be our shared success. As a country with a Muslim majority that has only recently shed the shackles of a totalitarian regime, Kazakhstan is proving by its experience that democracy can be built even under complex conditions. Kazakhstan is an essential partner in achieving foreign policy goals for the United States.<sup>46</sup>

Washington has always emphasized Kazakhstan as its most important partner in Central Asia. This resonates in its policy towards Kazakhstan. As the largest Central Asian country with a continuous stable and secure environment, America leans on Kazakhstan to deliver security and stability in and around the Caspian region through increased American economic engagement, including military funding and cooperation. Currently, numerous American companies are running profitable businesses and continue to invest in Kazakhstan’s economy. This, in turn, provides valuable revenue streams that fund the Republic’s military.

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<sup>46</sup> Saudabayev, “Kazakhstan and the United States: Growing Partnership for Security and Prosperity,” 1-3.

US security cooperation with Central Asian countries has been relatively steady and generally productive. But efforts with Kazakhstan, almost any way that one would measure, have made the most progress. The relationship had the distinct benefit of being the first and having access to more resources over time. But other factors have also played roles. The military assistance programs and all the efforts with the Republic were anchored by plans that were better defined with specific objectives. The United States invested a lot of time and effort.<sup>47</sup>

Nevertheless, several factors have severely limited United States influence in Kazakhstan. Even if the United States is a global superpower, it is a distant one from the perspective of Kazakh officials who continuously support and maintain strong relations with other world leaders such as the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China.<sup>48</sup> And from the perspective of the Kazakh government and its people, it is easier said than done to parlay with the Eagle while the Bear is at the back door.

#### Kazakh-Russian Military Cooperation

When the Soviet Union fell apart, two main factors made Kazakhstan's relationship with Russia distinguished among the other post-Soviet states. First of all, the country had the largest percentage of an ethnic Russian population. Secondly, it became the only Central Asian country that shared the longest border with the new Russian Federation, extending 4,254 miles.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> McCarthy, "The Limits of Friendship," 164.

<sup>48</sup> Weitz, *Kazakhstan and the New International Politics of Eurasia*, 129.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

This is further underlined due to the shared history and legacy of the Soviet expansion. The former Soviet bloc still experiences similar ethnic and cultural ties that bind it together and keep a good relationship between the Kazakh and Russian peoples. But more importantly the centuries old socio-cultural heritage is among the main reasons, which contribute to the close strategic partnership of both countries in matters of politics, economics, and security. Both nations have recently signed numerous agreements within a framework of mutually advantageous cooperation.

Having analyzed the military aspects, it should be taken into account that the Kazakh Armed Forces are closely linked to Russia by historical ties. It is undeniable that the omnipresent nature of Russian military training, doctrines, and high level of dependence on Russian military equipment and weapons may have both positive and negative affects on the Kazakh Army.<sup>50</sup>

Undoubtedly, all of these facts are not lost on Moscow who has clearly underscored certain levels of military cooperation with specific countries that it views to be within the purview of the Russian Federation's for various reasons. Russia's military cooperation with Kazakhstan is a cornerstone to its Central Asian geopolitical approach. In spite of the clear aftermath of the Soviet Army's legacy in the Republic and the many benefits it brings, this should not be misconstrued with thinking that both countries have complete parallel goals. Kazakhstan seeks the ability to continue integration with the West and whomever it chooses, as this also brings significant benefits for Kazakh national security.

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<sup>50</sup> Weitz, *Kazakhstan and the New International Politics of Eurasia*, 129; McDermott, "United States and NATO Military Cooperation with Kazakhstan," 16, 25.

The relations between Kazakhstan and Russia are rapidly approaching a critical junction in the near future that will determine whether relations between the two states in the field of military cooperation will be maintained. Kazakhstan has the opportunity to take an off-ramp and seek military-economic integration with the West or retain the vestiges of former Soviet structures and retain a formal partnership within the CSTO. The Kazakh leaders also should understand that this development will be guided to different political centers and goals oriented to Russia and China. In order to preserve political freedom of maneuver, Kazakhstan has already created its own defense industry, which has already managed to prove its value as a strategic decision, providing the nation with guaranteed resources.<sup>51</sup>

Since Kazakhstan gained independence, military cooperation between the two countries has been developing on various bilateral agreements that are mutually beneficial for both parties.

Mostly, they are in the following areas: military education, the purchase of weapons and ammunition, the formation of collective forces, joint exercises, engagement in the headquarters level, common air defense system, membership in the CSTO, and the establishment of collective forces.

One example of active cooperation in the field of military education is the recent statement by Russian Deputy Defense Minister Colonel-General Alexander Fomin during Russian-Kazakh consultations on the coordination of defense policy in Nur-Sultan. He

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<sup>51</sup> 365 Info, “Казахстан и Россия в условиях новой эпохи: военное сотрудничество [Kazakhstan and Russia in a new era: military cooperation],” December 19, 2018, accessed February 20, 2020, <https://365info.kz/2018/12/kazakhstan-i-rossiya-v-usloviyah-novoj-epohi-voennoe-sotrudnichestvo>.

said that currently, 285 military personnel from Kazakhstan are studying at universities of the Ministry of Defense of Russia. Furthermore, in the upcoming academic year, Russia plans to accept 170 Kazakhstani military personnel for training. He has also mentioned that related documents have been signed and will be transferred to the Kazakh side shortly.<sup>52</sup>

Another critical aspect in the field of defense cooperation is related to weapons and ammunition. After the collapse of the USSR, 196 defense enterprises remained in the territory of the Republic. This naturally made the two countries very close by many military standards. Besides this boon, Russia sells weapons and military equipment to Kazakhstan for discounted prices.

The Republic's armed forces are equipped with the latest weapons and military equipment with the broad support of the Russian defense industry. Given these facts, the transition to other standards of weapons and equipment, including NATO, is disadvantageous for Kazakhstan. In other words, any changes in the military-technical nature will entail enormous economic consequences. The reader should understand that wholesale change over of armament directly relates to second and third-order amendments of strategy, tactics, a system of combat training, and the education of military personnel.

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<sup>52</sup> Department of Information and Mass Communications of the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation, "Подписано дополнительное соглашение к действующему контракту на обучение граждан Казахстана в российских военных вузах [An additional agreement was signed to the existing contract for the training of citizens of Kazakhstan in Russian military universities]," March 2019, accessed March 28, 2020, [http://contract.mil.ru/sel\\_contract/news/more.htm?id=12231188@egNews](http://contract.mil.ru/sel_contract/news/more.htm?id=12231188@egNews).

At present, Kazakhstan almost entirely provides its army with Russian-made automotive equipment. The country mastered the production of small missiles and artillery ships under Russian license. In addition, and by agreement with the Russian Federation, a service center for modernization and repair of T-72 main battle tanks, as well as BMP-1 and BMP-2 infantry fighting vehicles was created in Kazakhstan.<sup>53</sup>

Moreover, it is necessary to note the geographical aspect that has severely affected bilateral military relations. In particular as it relates to the Unified Regional Air Defense System (URDS) of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation which was created in 2013. The URDS is an integral part of the integrated air defense system of the member states of the CIS and its command located in Almaty, Kazakhstan.<sup>54</sup>

Furthermore, due to the fact that strategic missile forces are a critical factor in Russian security, Russia rents Kazakh territory for the use of military-strategic weapon testing that includes the launching of vital rocket systems and space-based equipment. These tests occur in the following Kazakhstan sites. The Sary-Shagan training ground on Lake Balkhash and a separate radio engineering unit of the 3rd Separate Army of the Rocket and Space Defense of the Russian Space Forces. The unit is part of a unified missile attack warning system, and also repairs the technical parameters of combat missile systems tested at the Sary-Shagan training ground.

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<sup>53</sup> Khrolenko, “Для чего Казахстан и Россия наращивают военно-техническое сотрудничество [Why Kazakhstan and Russia are building up military-technical cooperation].”

<sup>54</sup> Marat Shibutov, “Российско-казахстанские отношения на современном этапе. Часть 3 [Russian-Kazakh Relations at the Present Stage. Part 3],” Regnum, December 2018, accessed March 31, 2020, <https://regnum.ru/news/polit/2534699.html>.



Also, included is the Baikonur space center in the Kyzylorda region and the 171st Aviation commandant's office in Karaganda, which is designed to provide logistical support and control search and evacuation operations during the launch and landing of spacecraft from the Baikonur space center. This also includes the Taisogan training ground in western Kazakhstan, which is the state flight test center. The facilities of the 4th State Central Training Ground and the 929th State Flight Test Center in West Kazakhstan region are used for testing the A-135 Russian missile defense system, which has been on combat alert since 1995.<sup>55</sup>

The Russian authorities should understand the strategic value of mutual allied relations with Kazakhstan. Key transit routes for Russia, connecting China and the European Union, pass through Kazakhstan. Additionally, the common military space of Russia and Kazakhstan, active participation in the CSTO, and the URDS are extremely important for the strategic security of Russia itself.

However, despite all the positive factors in the field of defense cooperation with Russia, Kazakhstan also takes into account Western and Chinese military-political interests attempting to maintain a balance. This often takes the form of economic considerations that strike a neutral tone between some of the world powers. This has an indirect touchpoint on military cooperation in the form of armament purchases that would stimulate the Russian economy.

Gleb Pavlovsky, a Russian political scientist and expert on political and integration processes in the post-Soviet space, has recently noted non-specified United

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<sup>55</sup> 365 Info, "Казахстан и Россия в условиях новой эпохи: военное сотрудничество [Kazakhstan and Russia in a new era: military cooperation]."

States guarantees to the Kazakh government. He goes on to say that Kazakhstan will take US interests into account in return when developing anti-Russian sanctions, which are an element of Kazakhstan's new geopolitical and geo-economics strategy, which will be based on its balancing between Moscow, Washington, and Beijing. Furthermore, Kazakhstan avoids conflict and confrontation with the United States, because otherwise, it would be too close to China. Therefore, the state raises indisputable topics of its non-involvement in the conflicts between Moscow and Washington, and, accordingly, they require recognition of their neutrality.<sup>56</sup>

And while involvement in this regard with the United States involves the withholding of certain things to Russia in acknowledging sanctions, it takes on a different approach with China. The economic power of the People's Republic is undeniable. But the military power of China is also increasingly a factor that has to be considered. For the Dragon, any economic considerations tend to go hand in hand with military ones.

### Kazakh-Chinese Military Cooperation

China is an ancient culture, and country, which has gone through several changes and shapes throughout thousands of years. The Kazakh people have historical ties with the Chinese stretching back across the years. Since Kazakhstan gained independence, the maintenance of good relations with great neighbors, the People's Republic of China, has

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<sup>56</sup> Gleb Pavlovsky, "Новая геополитическая стратегия Казахстана балансирует между РФ, США и КНР [Kazakhstan's new geopolitical strategy balances between Russia, USA and China]," n.d., accessed February 22, 2020, <https://inbusiness.kz/ru/last/novaya-geopoliticheskaya-strategiya-kazahstana-balansiruet>.

also been one of the main priorities in Kazakhstan's foreign policy.<sup>57</sup> Similar to the Russian Federation, Kazakhstan also shares a long border with China, 1,072 miles.

As well as Russia, China actively participates in the Central Asian region, mostly economically. For China, Kazakhstan is a strategically important country as its geographical location creates a peculiar buffer zone between Russia and China. Another indisputable fact that makes Kazakhstan strategically attractive is China's "Silk Road Economic Belt" and "Belt and Road" initiative. In turn, for Kazakhstan, China is the fourth largest investor after the Netherlands, the USA, and Switzerland.

Chinese interest in Central Asia is not new, nor its specific interest with Kazakhstan. The Republic has been a bit suspicious of Chinese intentions, likely due to perceived fears that a military intervention may occur. This was not without good reason as a Chinese map produced by the government in 1954 ostensibly shows parts of Kazakhstan to be well within the confines of the Chinese declared borders.<sup>58</sup>

The start of Chinese cooperation with the Kazakh Republic began in 1996 when the "Shanghai Five" signed an agreement of confidence building in the military field in the border region. This provided a framework that saw military exercises along the border in 2006, 2015, and 2016. Military cooperation between the two countries is mainly based on participation in the SCO, and the multinational forum the Conference on Interaction

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<sup>57</sup> Bohr et al., *Kazakhstan: Tested by transition*, 86.

<sup>58</sup> Samuel Ramani, "The Emerging China-Kazakhstan Defense Relationship. What was once an adversarial relationship is giving way to a strategic partnership," *The Diplomat*, December 23, 2015, accessed April 2, 2020, <https://thediplomat.com/2015/12/the-emerging-china-kazakhstan-defense-relationship>.

and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia. The initial agreement made by the Shanghai Five in 1996 blossomed and was a forerunner of what the SCO is today.<sup>59</sup>

Border security remains the central factor for security cooperation between Kazakhstan and China, due to the considered threat from the Uighur populations who reside southeast of Kazakhstan just across the border. Also, the focus of Kazakh Chinese cooperation relates to preparation for asymmetric warfare. China provides special forces training to Kazakhstan in order to increase the preparedness of the Kazakh Armed Forces for conflicts in urban, mountain, and marine areas. In the past two decades, around one hundred Kazakh military students have attended Chinese academies. Besides this, Chinese military assistance includes providing communications equipment and other specialized defense technologies to the Kazakh military.<sup>60</sup>

At a recent forum called “One Belt, One Way” in Beijing, former President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev said, “China never dictates its terms, never says: ‘Live as we live, as the West always teaches us.’ China does not say: ‘We will help you, but you will become like us.’ This policy of China is attractive.”<sup>61</sup>

A growing area of interest that will very likely foster an expansion of military cooperation as time goes on will be in the area of energy. In 2009, China and Kazakhstan

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<sup>59</sup> Nurlan Aliyev, “China-Russia Security Cooperation in Central Asia,” The CACI Analyst, October 22, 2019, accessed April 2, <https://www.cacianalyst.org/publications/analytical-articles/item/13591-china-russia-security-cooperation-in-central-asia.html>.

<sup>60</sup> Ramani, “The Emerging China-Kazakhstan Defense Relationship.”

<sup>61</sup> Manshuk Asautay, китайские инвестиции: опасения населения и интересы властей [Chinese investments: public concerns and interests of the authorities],” Radio Azattyk, September 2019, accessed February 25, 2020, <https://rus.azattyq.org/a/kazakhstan-china-protests-roots-opinions/30154375.html>.

inaugurated the first oil pipeline from China into Central Asia that has become the China-Kazakh pipeline. At present, the Chinese government does not yet have a robust program in place to protect critical energy infrastructure that is seen in other areas of the world where such pipelines have been operating for decades. Kazakh protection of its national sovereignty has precluded Chinese forces from providing that security, forcing an indirect approach with Chinese authorities working in mixed units with the Kazakh military, or providing training or other support.<sup>62</sup>

The pursuit of economic goals has caused the Chinese government to direct increased military cooperation as a way to facilitate those financial goals. The Khorgos Gateway, a large dry port connecting Kazakhstan and China via railway, is one such example of critical economic infrastructure that China values. A 2012 agreement between two states allowed for a far more robust military cooperation and deepening ties.<sup>63</sup>

On the other hand, remnants of the Soviet-era legacy remain an obstacle to Chinese cooperation due to conflicting weapon systems, operational language, and army tactics that are still Russian in almost every way. Therefore, Chinese collaboration in terms of an ongoing military affiliation does not seem forward-looking or sustainable under current conditions. China's internationally recognized problems, such as overpopulation and a lack of certain natural resources, may significantly affect the country's foreign policy concerning neighboring Kazakhstan. Many experts now

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<sup>62</sup> Sebastien Peyrouse, "Military Cooperation between China and Central Asia: Breakthrough, Limits, and Prospects," The Jamestown Foundation, March 5, 2010, accessed April 3, 2020, <https://jamestown.org/program/military-cooperation-between-china-and-central-asia-breakthrough-limits-and-prospects>.

<sup>63</sup> Mariya Y. Omelicheva and Ruoxi Du, "Kazakhstan's Multi-Vectorism and Sino-Russian Relations," *Insight Turkey* 20, no. 4 (2018): 95-110.

confidently declare that one of the strategic goals of China is the development of new territories. Also, in recent years, as is also true with the United States and Russia, China has actively modernized its army and defense industry and steadily increased its defense budget.

In military cooperation with China, Kazakhstan must consider China's strategic goals, economic and military potential, as well as its territorial and demographic problems. All of these factors may significantly affect Kazakh national security and cannot be taken lightly. Much like Russia, the Chinese government is able to express displeasure in ways that would impact Kazakhstan negatively. Dynamically different than United States and Russian cooperation, Kazakh and Chinese cooperation is often a byproduct of economic facilitation. While it is possible that this represents a "weaker" focus on military cooperation, one should not underestimate the longevity of Chinese cooperation demand based on the economic security of the Republic.<sup>64</sup>

### Analysis Summary

The former First President of the Republic of Kazakhstan – the Nation's Leader "Elbasi" Nursultan Nazarbayev may not have realized how forward thinking the Republic's first foreign policy was when he announced it in 1992. Multivectorism at the time was simply a way for a newly independent country to navigate the inherent risks associated with negotiating with world powers and a diverse social fabric. A landlocked

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<sup>64</sup> Jin Wang and Dehang Kong, "Counter-Terrorism Cooperation Between China and Central Asian States in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization," *China Quarterly of International Strategic Studies* 05, no. 01 (2019): 78-79, accessed April 7, 2020, <https://www.worldscientific.com/doi/pdf/10.1142/S2377740019500027>.

state that has extensive borders with two of three global superpowers and relies on imports and exports, Kazakhstan had little choice. But that then nascent approach has matured over the years and is mostly the reason for stability and peace within the country.

The rest is due to a military that is rapidly gaining experience, interoperability, training, and growing more professional each year. The Kazakh nation owes this in large part to its partners across the world. Yet, at the same time, the government of Kazakhstan must maintain a strategic balance in this dance that occurs among giants. Hazards are strewn across the dance floor, and the nation's policies must be evaluated and updated as conditions change.

The analysis above painted a common picture and provided an overview of the present state of Kazakh military cooperation with each of the studied countries. Each nation is shown in a positive light with no regard to potential negatives from the arrangements. For the most part, this analysis has focused on military and security cooperation. However, the author acknowledges that this is often not entirely separate from other considerations and heavy emphasis on economics.

Having made the comparisons of the various countries, the author proposes to answer the primary research question: How can Kazakhstan best balance militarily between the three most powerful countries in the world to achieve national security objectives? He also covers the secondary questions designed to help answer the primary research question: What is the present state of military cooperation between Kazakhstan, the United States of America, the Russian Federation, and the People's Republic of China? What national security benefits does Kazakhstan gain from military cooperation with each of these three countries?

Each discussed country has its own unique status and impact on Kazakh national security and provides a vital puzzle piece to the whole. Military cooperation with the United States provides vital financial, logistical, and training support. It also lends credibility with Western nations and a foot in the door with the United Nations and NATO partners. Russia provides continuity of traditional military systems, arms, and ready interoperability. It also provides upscaled defensive protection that Kazakhstan could not do alone with partnered integrated air defense, arms production, and strategic depth in supplies. Meanwhile, China offers financial security and the means to defend it through direct and indirect infrastructure support and associated training of military personnel to preserve it. Alone, Kazakhstan may have had additional issues leading to setbacks. Having a single vectored approach could also have led to disaster in that Kazakhstan may have been forced to be far more dependent.

Conclusions and recommendations by the author follow these comparisons above. They focus on the depth and scope that take each country into account, where details are lacking, assessed for recommendations for further academic study.



## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Our priorities remain unchanged – development of partnerships with our neighbors – Russia, China, Central Asian countries as well as the USA, European Union, and Asian nations.

—Nursultan Nazarbayev, *Strategy Kazakhstan-2050*

#### Conclusions

Kazakhstan is deeply steeped in culture, something that it shares with other countries. Something it also shares is a healthy respect for destiny and the eternal struggle to control it. This is not lost on Kazakh parents. When children reach the age where they will attempt to take their first steps, the ancient Kazakh tradition of “Tusau Kesu” occurs. While often celebrated in different ways, it is consistent that the child legs are tied with black and white ribbons symbolizing all that is good or bad in life. These are cut by an honorable relative, usually female, in the hope that he or she will impart further qualities to the child. As parents, we want what is best for our children. So, too, our countries.

It has been decades since the Republic underwent the similarity of the “Tusau Kesu” ceremony that saw it stumble forward into a brave new world. Birthed from the remnants of the Soviet Motherland, recognized first and offered help by the Americans and their Lady Liberty, now wooed by the descendants of the only woman to ever wear yellow and rule the Chinese empire, Wu Zetian. It is not yet known who cut the ribbons binding the legs of the Republic. Only time will tell.

The goal of this study has been aimed at answering this question, or at least pointing the reader towards where it is headed. To do this, Kazakhstan have had to identify and determine the most viable aspects of military cooperation with the United

States, Russia, and China. This has been done with the intent of maintaining a balanced approach towards the world's great powers. Through this lens, Kazakhstan have painted the extent of geopolitical interests of those powerful countries and their attitudes towards Kazakhstan—all the while grounding ourselves in the context of Kazakh national interests and their potential success through cooperation.

Based on the conducted study, the author gives answers to the primary research question: “How can Kazakhstan best balance militarily and geopolitically between the three most powerful countries in the world to achieve its national security objectives?” and the secondary questions: “What is the present state of military cooperation between the Republic Kazakhstan, and the United States of America, the Russian Federation, and the People's Republic of China? What national security benefits does Kazakhstan gain from military cooperation with each of these three countries?” With these questions in mind, the author can propose his recommendations.

In order to answer those questions, let us review the fundamental aspects of the Kazakh Republic and its foreign policy strategies. First of all, the multivector policy pursued by the leadership of modern Kazakhstan acts as a guarantor of national security, economic stability, and further integration with the ideas of Western democracy. Moreover, it is necessary to note that since independence, the choice of such a strategy has become a necessity based on the unique geographical location, post-Soviet legacy, and the global geopolitical environment Let us put this more plainly.

The well-known founder and first Great Khan and Emperor of the Mongol Empire Temujin (Chinggis Khan) is noted to have supposedly said that people conquered on the

other side of the lake should also be governed from the other side of the lake.<sup>65</sup> And while this is not entirely appropriate, as the Kazakh people bend a knee to no nation, it is still proper here in that the great nations should remember whose lake it is. Ultimately, the Republic intends to follow its own affairs and chart its own destiny. However, we are realists. For while the Kazakh nation is free now, it was also Temujin who taught us that the strength of a wall is no greater than the courage of the men who defend it. It was he who scattered the tribes of the steppe, as one would stones, before uniting all the people of the felt walls.

The path chosen from the moment of gaining liberation turned out to be beneficial for the future of the country in many aspects. Primarily, it allowed the attraction of all kinds of foreign investments, which in turn served as an impetus for the development of the country's economy. With its vast and diverse natural resources, the country has become a kind of hub for the world's largest investors. This, in turn, has had allowed the country the breathing room to cultivate a unique and separate path from that of many of its neighbors.

From a security perspective, the ongoing military policy of the country has allowed Kazakhstan to maintain stability within the country without birthing opponents in the international arena at the same time. In addition, the state's ability to be in the Eastern power blocks while maintaining military cooperation with the West allows to maintain neutrality and avoid any obvious preferences. The Republic's military follows

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<sup>65</sup> Ryan Holiday, "9 Lessons on Power and Leadership from Genghis Khan," *Forbes*, May 7, 2012, accessed April 15, 2020, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/ryan-holiday/2012/05/07/9-lessons-on-leadership-from-genghis-khan-yes-genghis-khan/#78d5920f6996>.

the principals of honest labor and military feats of honor. One must do what must be done to help the people while defending them from foreign enemies who would do them harm.

In general, all the mentioned above geopolitical factors affect national security and socio-economic stability of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Furthermore, having analyzed the role of military cooperation in Kazakh foreign policy, it is safe to say that the chosen strategy has thus far proved itself to be successful. The security of the country is maintained, and its military power is steadily growing.

The author gives an answer to the primary research question by saying that Kazakh authorities should not only maintain the existing relationship but also work towards it, strengthening and increase. At the same time, continuing the previously set equilibrium strategy, Nur-Sultan must remain extremely alert and cautious and yet be bold in leading the country forward. For a people without a Khan are as a land without mountains.

Besides, being an active member of the different military-political blocks, Kazakhstan needs to interpret positions and preferences more precisely in matters of its own security. Taking into account that the military-political situation in the modern world tends to change intensely, any confrontation between global powers may have significant aftermath effects to Kazakh national security. It is realistic to assume that the entirety of Kazakh security assuredness does not rest on the Republic's shoulders alone.

In other words, in case of military conflict between the United States, China, or Russia, Kazakhstan may not have guarantees that it can remain neutral despite its participation in CSTO, SCO, or despite having security programs with NATO. This may not be possible. Realizing that this approach may fail through no fault of the Republic, it

must have contingency plans in place for what most assuredly would be a large scale conflict. There is an old Kazakh proverb known to the eldest of us passed to the younger who do not remember or know. There are no people without conflict, there is no land without enemies. And as small as the sparrow is, it still defends its nest..<sup>66</sup>

The approach of walking the tightrope appears to be working at the moment. Based on friendly relations with countries mentioned above in the past, as well as future plans and programs, the answer to the secondary question: “What is the present state of military cooperation between Kazakhstan, the United States of America, the Russian Federation, and the People’s Republic of China?” is answered by the researcher as mutually beneficial for all parties. And this does seem to be the case for Kazakhstan especially.

Proof of this is the fact that since gaining independence, Kazakhstan has never been involved in any domestic or international military conflicts. This in comparison with some other post-Soviet republics. In addition, the work carried out since independence to strengthen global security has proven that Kazakhstan can be a reliable and profitable partner. It has also provided a favorable climate and sets the pace to continue the previously successful course of Kazakh foreign strategy. In addition, the country’s ability to maintain balanced military cooperation has also produced a variety of secondary benefits that have been growing alongside the multivector policy with the biggest gain being found in the economic sector.

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<sup>66</sup> Oriental Express Caucasus and Asia (OREXCA), “Kazakh proverbs. Folklore of Kazakhstan,” accessed April 16, 2020, <https://www.orexca.com/kazakhstan/culture/proverbs.htm>.

The answer to the last subquery of this study: “What national security benefits does Kazakhstan gain from military cooperation with each of these three countries?” led the writer to look into noted foreign policy leaders. In particular, the author found the words of a famous American politician, diplomat, geopolitical consultant, and Nobel Peace Prize winner Henry Kissinger, who said, “America has no permanent friends or enemies, only interests.”<sup>67</sup> This is something that the Republic can appreciate.

Having interpreted Kissinger’s quote through the lens of ongoing Kazakh military cooperation between the United States, Russia, and China, it is safe to say that the First President of the Republic of Kazakhstan – Elbasy Nursultan Nazarbayev has been successful in pursuing the Republic’s national interests. Maintaining balance in terms of security issues has always been one of the country’s leading priorities because it sets a favorable geopolitical stage for pursuing the multivector policy. Furthermore, conducting an analysis in this field has proved that interaction with each of the three world powers brings its own unique fruit, which in turn are successfully reaped by the Kazakh side.

In particular, for a short period of military cooperation with the United States, the newly independent Republic has received many benefits that positively influenced the country’s defense situation. Continuing to cooperate militarily with Washington and NATO as a whole, Kazakhstan thereby strengthens its geopolitical position regionally while also at the same time containing the extensive Chinese and Russian influence in the country. The Kazakh-American relationship is a powerful symbol of Kazakh readiness to cooperate with the Western world in promoting democracy and protecting human rights.

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<sup>67</sup> Henry A. Kissinger, “Biography,” accessed April 17, 2020, <https://www.henryakissinger.com>.

As recent as June of 2019, Kazakh soldiers could be found training next to American soldiers in the annual exercise known as STEPPE EAGLE. The value of these touchpoints is clear as the Republic's Army grows in confidence and displays its ability for interoperability with those forces of the West, and more specifically, United Nations and NATO forces. LTC Dan Horst, the Officer in charge of the exercise, was quoted as saying, "Kazakhstan has become an exporter of security. They're not just consuming assistance to get better, they're better now, and they're contributing to the security picture." It is also clear that this is not just a talking point. With the help of the United States, the Republic became the first Central Asian country to deploy soldiers in Company strength or larger to serve under the United Nations as peacekeepers in 2018. Following in the footsteps of the French, British, Americans, and many others, the deployment saw them serve in Lebanon having donned the iconic baby blue helmet worn by peacekeepers and known to all around the world.<sup>68</sup>

It is clear that the special relationship between Kazakhstan and the United States is growing. The current Commander of US Army Forces Command (FORSCOM), then the Commander of US Central Command (CENTCOM), may well remember his 2016 visit. General Michael Garrett visited the National Defence University named after the First President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Elbasi, even donating a replica sword carried by the Third Army's own General Patton. It is without a doubt that these events

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<sup>68</sup> J. P. Lawrence, "US-led Steppe Eagle helps build Kazakhstan into stable partner in Central Asia," *Stars and Stripes*, June 27, 2019, accessed April 20, 2020, <https://www.stripes.com/news/us-led-steppe-eagle-helps-build-kazakhstan-into-stable-partner-in-central-asia-1.587858>.

are building a relationship and history between the two armies. But this history is still young yet, and the Republic has not forgotten its past or the sacrifices of those who came before.<sup>69</sup>

Moscow is preserved in part due to the Kazakh blood spilled there in its defense. There are those who remember Kazakh-Soviet military officer Bauyrzhan Momyshuly, a Hero of the Soviet Union, whose battalion belonged to the storied Panfilov Division. They held for two days repeatedly repulsing waves of German Soldiers. Lesser known is the name other Kazakh-Soviet soldier Rakhimzhan Qoshqarbaev, a hero of Kazakhstan, who led his unit to the heart of Berlin and was the first to raise the flag of the Soviet Union of the Reichstag days before the famous photo everyone knows so well.<sup>70</sup>

This bond between the Russian Federation and the Kazakh Republic is close in many respects as a result of this history. This relationship, while significantly different than before, is the closest of the three global powers. Due to the many earlier evaluated factors, the Kazakh-Russian partnership brings the most valuable benefits and makes Russia distinguished in comparison with the United States and China. The existing fact that both countries not only have close historical, geographical, economic, and political

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<sup>69</sup> Defense Visual Information Distribution Service, “U.S. Army Central commander travels to Kazakhstan,” December 29, 2016, accessed April 23, 2020, <https://www.dvidshub.net/image/3077311/us-army-central-commander-travels-kazakhstan>.

<sup>70</sup> KAZINFORM International News Agency, “Ерлігі 62 жылдан соң ғана мойындалған Рақымжан Қошқарбаев [Rakhimzhan Qoshqarbaev’s heroism was recognized only after 62 years],” September 25, 2009, accessed April 24, 2020, [https://www.inform.kz/kz/erligi-62-zhyldan-son-gana-moyyndalghan-rakymzhan-koshkarbaev\\_a2200323](https://www.inform.kz/kz/erligi-62-zhyldan-son-gana-moyyndalghan-rakymzhan-koshkarbaev_a2200323).



ties but also are allies in the global security strategy is evidenced in its importance to the Kazakh national security.

This relationship is truly unique in that Russia is also the only one of the global powers that has strategic military resources that reside within the actual country of Kazakhstan. Nur-Sultan is also tied to the Russian Federation by the sheer amount of military hardware and upkeep required that is within the Russian sphere. This is further compounded by the reliance of Kazakh personnel on the Russian military schools that they attend. And though it fluctuates, the Russian military is spread throughout the country in roughly nine or so locations. The rent alone is a significant boon to the Kazakh government. Not to mention the Russian ethnic minority that lives within the country itself.<sup>71</sup>

And on the topic of economic ties, the benefits and ease of the geographic closeness of Russia allow for a significant advantage over the United States that quite simply cannot be matched on the same scale that an adjacent country such as Russia can. This very clearly has led to an imbalance in terms of the importance of the Russian relationship. But this is offset by another neighbor that has a vested interest in ensuring that the Republic and it are close, one who views its national security is partly paired with Kazakhstan.

The issue of Kazakh-Chinese defense interoperability is not exactly clear cut. To China it is also tied to the issue of terrorism as the Kazakh border is adjacent to a restless

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<sup>71</sup> Marlene Laruelle, Dylan Royce, and Serik Beyssembayev, “Untangling the puzzle of ‘Russia’s influence’ in Kazakhstan,” *Eurasian Geography and Economics* 60, no. 2 (July 30, 2019): 211-243, accessed April 27, 2020, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/15387216.2019.1645033>.

Uyghur population that China has been attempting to control for quite some time. And while the issue resides within China, the Republic wants to prevent issues within its own territory and also show no cause for China to have umbrage with the country or perceive that it is not doing enough to tamp down Muslim extremism.<sup>72</sup>

However, interoperability between the two countries is not simply beneficial for this reason. It is also conjoined as a natural by product of economic coordination that occurs between the two countries on a regular basis. As additional infrastructure or trade nodes pop up, or traffic increases, there is a need to secure them and provide the local stability needed to allow for additional government-sanctioned transactions. These nodes are part of plans to establish and patrol free trade zones between the two countries.<sup>73</sup>

But the sanctioned trade that occurs is just one part. Another old Kazakh proverb states that people without thieves are like a land without wolves. And so, it is at that border as well. This has driven the Chinese and Kazakh forces to further interoperability in the form of joint patrols.

Ultimately, the author found that Chinese cooperation on military matters benefited Kazakhstan overall and may well be the most intertwined with other aspects of national power beyond just the military. Having shared the common border with China, military cooperation allows the enhancement of interoperability with its uniformed

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<sup>72</sup> Radio Free Europe/Radio Free Liberty, "China Thanks Kazakhstan For 'Support' On Muslim Crackdown In Xinjiang," March 29, 2019, accessed April 27, 2020, <https://www.rferl.org/a/china-thanks-kazakhstan-for-support-on-muslim-crackdown-in-xinjiang/29849405.html>.

<sup>73</sup> Youyou Zhou, "The buyers and sellers of Khorgos, a special trade zone on the Kazakhstan-China border," *Quartz Daily Brief*, October 26, 2019, accessed April 27, <https://qz.com/1720196/who-visits-khorgos-the-trade-zone-on-china-kazakhstan-border>.

services, thereby providing more reliable protection of the international border overall as lessons learned there can be transported to any border.

In conclusion, the comparative analysis of Kazakh military cooperation with the United States, the Russian Federation, and the People's Republic of China is an essential part of any geopolitical study, especially this one. However, there are definitely areas that can be proposed for increased and more detailed research. The present study was limited and touched only on the main aspects of military cooperation. It was through these that the author conducted analysis and proposes recommendations.

It also did not address or account for the potential aspects of military interoperability that are currently being conducted or planned beyond some superficial notes. And while the exercises and other activities of the different nations are addressed, it is specifically done in a manner that intends to be fair and impartial so as to prevent misperception by the reader and undercut the Kazakh multivector policy unintentionally.

The author identified the existing gaps in Kazakh foreign policy, which may adversely affect the country's defenses and affect national security in general. The completed study allowed the author to answer the primary and secondary research questions of the thesis and develop conclusions. It also allowed the identification of more paths to take for those that should bear the burden of further research on this topic.

### Recommendations

No thesis is complete without recommendations. Having analyzed the most viable aspects of military cooperation with the United States, Russia, and China and also taking into account the current geopolitical situation in the world, it becomes clear that Kazakhstan needs to strengthen its military-political positions and continue the chosen

course of multivector policy. However, this policy needs a whole of government approach which may be lacking. While the focus of this paper has been on the military aspect, it is hard to disassociate it from the diplomatic, informational, and economic aspects of national power.

It is recommended that a government policy assessment be conducted in the various relevant fields to determine if explicit policies exist and are aligned with national policy. Where they do not exist, teams of experts in those fields should create them in order to better project a single voice across the different fields that Kazakhstan represents itself. This should also be conducted internal to the military at the Ministry of Defense level. Applicable laws, policies, and doctrine should support the national multivector policy on all fronts.

In the process of this assessment and shoring up of policy and doctrinal gaps, additional subordinate issues or challenges will become apparent. These can then be addressed in a more detailed manner allowing for seams within the approach to be sealed. This will allow for the political entities and Kazakhstan as a whole to act in a unified manner yet separate within the divisions or arms that form the Kazakh government.

It is not intended to conduct this in a manner that prevents local authorities, different branches, or commanders from acting on their own or as they see fit. This is not to control actions or bind personnel to make no actions without consulting the government. Rather, it is intended to provide a framework of intent that can be acted within. Specific details should be left to the various experts in those fields where they reside. However, a lack of overarching guidance in the field of economics, information,

or diplomacy and the various subgroups may open up Kazakhstan to unintentional risk should global powers perceive something other than the approved Kazakh message.

Admittedly this is not the expertise of the author or the primary recommendation. However, it is a critical step that would allow the military to move forward in a targeted manner to implement the researcher's primary recommendation. This recommendation takes into account the reticence of the global powers in this current operational environment and puts the onus on the Republic to take the initiative. It has the benefit of dealing with a threat to Kazakh national security and appeals to the vested interests of the global powers.

Regardless of the culture, military, creed, or religion, the world is directly affected by the challenge of international terrorism. This is something that the international community cooperates on at many levels and to varying degrees. Currently, the existing danger of terrorism has only grown throughout the entire world and also bears a threat to Kazakh national security. With this in mind, the author proposes to combine military cooperation between the global powers and the Kazakh Republic.

The author envisions the creation of a Joint Multi-National Anti-Terrorism Unit with headquarters located on the territory of Kazakhstan. The purpose would be to combat international terrorism initially within the region of Central Asia but scalable to expand to larger areas of operation dependent upon success and palatability. The intent would be to incorporate staff from the Russian Federation, the United States, and the People's Republic of China with Kazakh counterparts.

The headquarters would be organized to be interoperable with NATO or United Nations standards. Certain aspects would mirror more Russian or Chinese approaches but

within the NATO-UN framework. This would allow for ease of interoperability. It is recommended that funding be shared across the global powers and Kazakhstan. Staff positions would be defined and manned by the countries on a rotational basis. It is recommended that command of the headquarters remains with Kazakhstan, but that the various staff have subordinate commanders from their countries.

It would be advantageous that the manpower of the unit be made up of regional elements to further cement a whole of region approach. For example, a company of Kyrgyz forces, a company of Uzbek forces, and company of Tajik forces, etc. The goal would be brigade strength but starting at battalion and building it as the unit proves itself. The potential for the addition of United States, Chinese, and Russian forces to be a part of the unit would be a goal as well. The author acknowledges that this might not be something that they would wish to do permanently. The Joint Multi-National Anti-Terrorism unit would serve as a headquarters to these units would be attached to for exercises or operations with a modular concept. The commanding authority will have a hybrid command structure and depend on the given tasks and success of the unit.

This is not unheard of as the Russians, Chinese, and the United States have experience in doing this in previous exercises and operations. The United States does this in a similar manner in Korea with the combined Division. The United States also has the Security Force Assistance Brigade (SFAB) units that focus on this sort of mission. However, the author is a realist and acknowledges the challenges. Establishing a battalion size element made up of regional forces would be a good first step. Critical to this would be obtaining staff from the three global powers to be a part of the unit. If possible, it would be beneficial to have a Kazakh Commander, and rotation between the Operations

Officer, Executive Officer, and Deputy Commander of the unit. These would be shared by the three global powers.

The researcher is amenable to several permutations, but it is likely wise to have the unit be sourced with Russian maintenance and supply personnel due to the prevalence of Russian weapons in the region. Should forces rotate in with NATO weapons, then this would be primary for them. Communications would be NATO or UN standard in order to allow for interoperability. Specific weapon systems could be leveraged by each country, such as Chinese mortar systems, small Russian arms, with US night vision devices.

This unit would be tasked with being a regional or international anti-terrorist unit. They would undergo special training focusing on anti-terrorism missions and counter-insurgency. Special forces would be included as a part of the mission set. The primary language would be English. Kazakh Officers would undergo English Language Courses. This would be done to again increase interoperability within a NATO or UN construct. The operating language would also be the English language though it is likely orders would go out in many languages.

The unit would be located within Kazakhstan, and personnel would rotate there to be a part. The maintaining of barracks, housing, and training facilities would be a combined responsibility. At least twice a year, the unit would conduct combined field exercises as part of the multinational unit. The locations for these would vary between member countries and based on agreements and problem sets the exercises would focus on. Additional details and aspects of the unit would be covered by an agreement between the various militaries, and the scope of the unit would be dependent upon multiple variables.

It is the belief of the author that the above initiatives in the field of military cooperation will affect the level of national security for several reasons. First of all, this initiative will serve as an example for the entire world community and, once again, will show the unique Kazakh perspective and a viable approach to solving global security issues. It also establishes Kazakhstan as a focal point and allows it to be the stage for increased international cooperation from which it ultimately benefits.

Secondly, the joint efforts of a combined staff made up of potential opponents that are focused on a common threat will help establish closer relations between them. For the Armed Forces of Kazakhstan, in turn, this is primarily a discovery of new ways and opportunities in the field of strengthening military cooperation and the continuation of the balancing strategy. In addition, this initiative can significantly increase the level of security in the region directly, and the world indirectly, thereby positively affecting the international image of Kazakhstan as a whole.



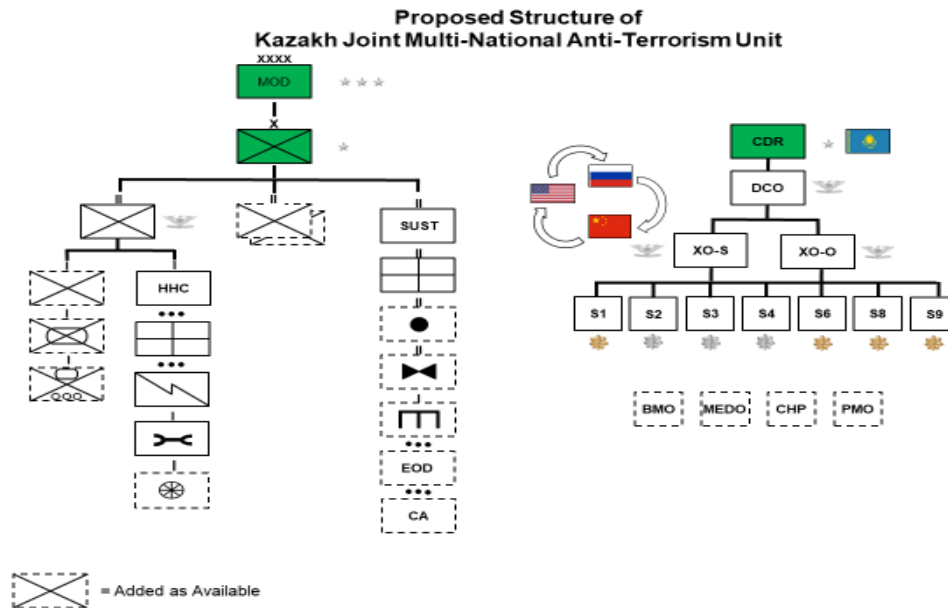


Figure 1 Proposed Structure of Kazakh  
Multi-National Anti-Terrorism Unit

*Source:* Created by author.

This chapter began by noting the Kazakh tradition of “Tusau Kesu,” where the author mused which global power the young Republic of Kazakhstan may turn to. However, it is clearly established that Kazakhstan hopes for three benevolent aunts who can nurture Kazakhstan in good will. A man who was known to have accomplished much in his life, Temujin, is attributed to have said many things and was known to have been wise in many respects. It is the hope of the author that his country and President may too also be as wise. The multivector policy is a noble one and should not easily be abandoned. To do so could lead to unmitigated risks, and ultimately, treading too far down a path that one would not wish to go. So again, must Kazakhstan balance the powers and interweave their goals with the state’s policies.

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