

Czech University of Life Sciences Prague

Faculty of Economics and Management

Department of Management



Bachelor Thesis

Foreign relationships of the Republic of Kazakhstan

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CZECH UNIVERSITY OF LIFE SCIENCES PRAGUE

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BACHELOR THESIS ASSIGNMENT

Sholpan Omirzhanova

Economics and Management

Thesis title

Foreign relationships of the Republic of Kazakhstan

Objectives of thesis

The main purpose of this bachelor thesis is to examine the concept of Kazakhstan's foreign relations during the years 1991-2022; to study the impact of international relations on its economy and the principles of the organization. Also, to determine the impact of the current Russian – Ukraine conflict on Kazakhstani foreign relations.

Methodology

The research methodology is based on the analysis of the relevant literature dealing with the topic, statistic-factual methods, generalization, and comparison.

The information, based on official statistics, informational and analytical materials, and special reviews, prepared by regulating bodies, as well as scientific literature, mass media, and internet publications about the structure of Kazakhstani foreign relations, will be gained in the first part of the thesis.

Secondly, to achieve the goal a SWOT analysis of the position of the Republic of Kazakhstan in world policy; a PEST analysis of the cooperation of the country with the CIS organization will be made.

The final step is to combine all the collected information and concluded what are the perspectives of Kazakhstani foreign relations, and what is its role in world policy.

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International relations, Republic of Kazakhstan, foreign policy, international organizations, diplomacy, Commonwealth, economy

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Declaration

I declare that I have worked on my bachelor thesis titled "Foreign relationships of the Republic of Kazakhstan" by myself and I have used only the sources mentioned at the end of the thesis. As the author of the bachelor thesis, I declare that the thesis does not break any copyrights.

In Prague on 15.03.2024 _____

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Foreign relationships of the Republic of Kazakhstan

Abstract

Foreign relations of Kazakhstan is the subject of this bachelor thesis. Kazakhstan's role in global affairs has significantly evolved since the dissolution of the former Soviet Union, positioning it as one of pivotal players in international relations. This thesis delves into the trajectory of Kazakhstan's foreign policy and the factors shaping it, given its strategic geographical location bridging Europe and Asia and its vast reservoirs of natural resources. Engaging actively within prominent international organizations like the UN, OSCE, SCO, OIC, CSTO, CIS, and others has bolstered Kazakhstan's diplomatic stature and global influence. Furthermore, Kazakhstan has cultivated diplomatic ties with 130 countries and the European Union, further enhancing its international standing. Given the integral role of foreign policy in shaping Kazakhstan's foreign relations, this thesis aims to explore various aspects:

Examination of the current state of foreign relations and policy.

Analysis of Kazakhstan's collaboration with international organizations.

Fundamental principles guiding Kazakhstan's foreign policy.

Objectives and priorities within the foreign policy framework.

Anticipated trends and the future trajectory of Kazakhstan's foreign relations.

To comprehensively analyze this subject, methodologies such as SWOT analysis, PEST analysis, and basic statistical methods will be employed.

Keywords: International relations, Foreign policy, Economic relations, International organizations, Multivectorism, World politics.

Zahraniční vztahy Kazachstánu

Abstrakt

Zahraniční vztahy Kazachstánu je předmětem této bakalářské práce. Role Kazachstánu ve světových záležitostech se od rozpadu Sovětského svazu významně změnila, čímž se stala klíčovým hráčem v mezinárodních vztazích. Tato práce se zabývá trajektorií kazachstánské zahraniční politiky a faktory ji formujícími, s ohledem na jeho strategické geografické umístění mezi Evropou a Asií a jeho obrovské zásoby přírodních zdrojů. Aktivní zapojení Kazachstánu do významných mezinárodních organizací, jako jsou OSN, OBSE, SCO, OIC, CSTO, SNS, a další, posílilo jeho diplomatický postavení a globální vliv. Navíc si Kazachstán vybudoval diplomatické vztahy s 130 zeměmi a Evropskou unií, čímž dále zvýšil své mezinárodní postavení. Vzhledem k integrální roli zahraniční politiky při formování kazachstánských zahraničních vztahů má tato práce za cíl prozkoumat různé aspekty:

Analýza současného stavu zahraničních vztahů a politiky.

Analýza spolupráce Kazachstánu s mezinárodními organizacemi.

Základní principy řídící kazachstánskou zahraniční politiku.

Cíle a priority v rámci rámcové zahraniční politiky.

Očekávané trendy a budoucí trajektorie zahraničních vztahů Kazachstánu. Pro komplexní analýzu tohoto tématu budou použity metodologie jako SWOT analýza, PEST analýza a základní statistické metody.

Klíčová slova: Mezinárodní vztahy, Zahraniční politika, Hospodářské vztahy, Mezinárodní organizace, Multivektorismus, Světová politika.

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Introduction

In an era characterized by globalization, geopolitical shifts, and evolving security threats, the study of foreign relations and policies holds profound significance for nations worldwide. The Republic of Kazakhstan, located at the crossroads of Europe and Asia, occupies a pivotal position in shaping the dynamics of international politics. This thesis aims to delve into the complexities of Kazakhstan's foreign relations during a specific period and its role in the broader landscape of global affairs.

Kazakhstan's foreign relations are subject to multifaceted influences, including historical legacies, regional dynamics, and global trends. As a young nation attempting to establish its position on the world stage, Kazakhstan faces both opportunities and challenges in navigating the complexities of international diplomacy. Understanding the nuances of Kazakhstan's foreign relations is essential for understanding its strategic priorities, diplomatic engagements, and aspirations for the future.

This thesis aims to explore on Kazakhstan's diplomatic initiatives, strategic partnerships, and contributions to global governance by conducting a thorough analysis of its foreign relations. By examining Kazakhstan's interactions with international organizations, regional actors, and major powers, we may gain insights into its positioning within the international community and its pursuit of national objectives on the global arena.

Furthermore, this study aims to examine the fundamental principles guiding Kazakhstan's foreign policy, including its approach to sovereignty, non-interference, and regional cooperation. By elucidating the core tenets of Kazakhstan's foreign policy doctrine, we may better understand the rationale behind its diplomatic actions and strategic engagements.

Using a thorough methodology that includes literature review, comparative analysis, and empirical research, this thesis endeavors to provide a comprehensive understanding of Kazakhstan's foreign relations. By combining insights from academic scholarship, policy documents, and official publications, the author aims to offer nuanced perspectives on Kazakhstan's role in shaping the global geopolitical landscape.

Ultimately, this thesis seeks to contribute to scholarly discourse on international relations by offering a comprehensive analysis of Kazakhstan's foreign relations during a specific period. Examining the country's diplomatic engagements, strategic priorities, and aspirations for the future can provide valuable insights into its evolving role in the international arena and its contributions to global peace, stability, and prosperity.

1 Objectives and Methodology

1.1 Objectives

The aim of the thesis is to examine the main points of the Republic of Kazakhstan's foreign relations in that period of time and its position in world policy. Also, to determine the impact of the current Russian – Ukraine conflict on Kazakhstani foreign relations. Since foreign policy is an integral part of foreign relations in the country, in this thesis it will be necessary to touch on this topic as well. The main research questions that will be included in the thesis:

1. Analysis of the current situation of foreign relations and policy.
2. Cooperation of the Republic of Kazakhstan with international organizations.
3. Basic foreign policy principles.
4. Goals and objectives of the foreign policy.
5. Trends and vision of foreign relations development of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

1.2 Methodology

For a complete analysis and study of this topic, various methods such as SWOT analysis, PEST analysis, basic statistical methods will be used.

Methodology:

1. Studying documents.
2. SWOT analysis.
3. PEST analysis.
4. Basic statistical methods.
5. Comparison.

The research methodology is based on the analysis of the relevant literature dealing with the topic, generalization, and comparison.

The information, based on official statistics, informational and analytical materials, and special reviews, prepared by regulating bodies, as well as scientific literature, mass media, and internet publications about the structure of Kazakhstani foreign relations, will be gained in the first part of the thesis.

Secondly, to achieve the goal a SWOT analysis of the position of the Republic of Kazakhstan in world policy; a PEST analysis of the cooperation of the country with the CIS organization will be made.

The final step is to combine all the collected information and concluded what are the perspectives of Kazakhstani foreign relations, and what is its role in world policy.

The object of research of this paper is external relations.

The subject of this paper is the Republic of Kazakhstan.

To achieve the objectives of the theses, the following tasks will be solved:

- examine the theories and principles of international economic relations.
- to identify the importance of international relations at present in the conditions of globalization.
- to review the Republic of Kazakhstan after independence.
- examine the concept of Kazakhstan's external relations.
- identify the objectives and priorities of external relations of the Republic of Kazakhstan.
- consider the prospects of Kazakhstan's foreign policy (priorities of Kazakhstan's foreign policy, ways to increase the efficiency and economic effect of Kazakhstan's foreign policy).
- to consider Kazakhstan's strategic partnership with the EU and the CIS.
- identify the official position of Kazakhstan on conflicts in the region (conflicts in Ukraine, Middle East).

The theoretical basis of the study was the following sources: Concept of foreign policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2020-2030, A. S. Wilder "A rising global player: Kazakhstan's foreign policy in the 2020s", R. S. Zhanbulatova "Priorities of foreign policy of Kazakhstan", E. M. Kuzmina "Foreign economic relations of Kazakhstan", D. Malysheva "Kazakhstan: foreign policy dilemmas", Tokayev K-Zh. K. "Foreign policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan in the period of formation of a new world order", I.F. Shojonov "Eurasian vector of foreign policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan: concepts, regional trends, integration projects".

The first part will be based on literature and Internet resources about the concept of foreign policy, and the structure of international relations of the Republic of Kazakhstan. The second part will consist of SWOT analysis, PEST analysis and comparison. In conclusion, all collected information will be combined and the author will conclude what are the perspectives of Kazakhstani foreign relations.

2 Theoretical part

2.1 Foreign relations

Foreign relations represent the active engagements and exchanges a country undertakes with other nations and international entities. These interactions involve diplomatic dialogue, economic collaboration, cultural diplomacy, and strategic alliances, all with the aim of furthering the nation's interests and fostering stability on both regional and global scales (Wilder, 2020)

Nations navigate the complex landscape of foreign relations by deploying a variety of diplomatic tools and strategies to pursue their interests, preserve international norms, and collaborate on global concerns. In an increasingly interconnected world, effective diplomacy is critical for fostering cooperation, managing conflicts, and advancing common goals.

2.1.1 Theories and principles of international relations

Within the study of international relations, there are many theories that attempt to explain on how states operate within the international system. Some key theories and principles include realism, liberalism, and constructivism. (Waltz. 2006)

One of the key theories to be mentioned is the theory of *realism*. The theory posits that states are driven by national interests and that governments act primarily to maintain their security and control over other countries. This theory emphasizes power and interstate interaction, perceiving international politics as a power struggle among states. However, it has been criticized for being overly simplistic and neglecting aspects as culture, religion, or societal development.

Another important theory is the theory is *liberalism*; on the other hand, it emphasizes the importance of individual rights and freedoms as well as democracy. This theory focuses on how states can co-operate with each other to build an international society that underscores the importance of peace and prosperity for all people. *Constructivist* theory suggests that international relations are built through mutual interactions between states. This theory contends that international relations are about power rather than collective security or economic progress.

It is worth emphasizing that the theories and principles of international relations play an important role in today's world. They make it possible to understand and explain the complex processes and phenomena occurring in the sphere of modern world.

Along with the theories, there are principles that are the basis for building international relations. According to the UN Charter, the principles of international relations are intended to stabilize relations by restricting them to specific normative frameworks. (UN Charter, Chapter I, Article 2)

- The principle of sovereign equality of states: each state is required to respect the sovereignty of other participants in international relations.
- Non-use of force and threat of force, which indicates that all states should refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against any state's territorial integrity or political independence.
- Inviolability of state borders mandates to three elements: recognition of already existing borders, renunciation of any territorial claims now and in the future, and renunciation of any other infringement on borders.
- The principle of state territorial integrity emphasizes that states should refrain from any action aimed at violating the national unity and territorial integrity of any other state.
- The principle of self-determination of peoples and nations asserts unqualified respect for every people's freedom to freely select the ways and forms of their development.
- According to the principle of cooperation, states are obliged to collaborate on an international scale in order to address economic, social, cultural, and humanitarian challenges, as well as to maintain international peace and security.

Based on the principles outlined above, we may conclude that the primary goal of each states' foreign relation principle is to ensure peaceful coexistence and common security. Thus, understanding and applying these theories and principles are crucial and enable states to develop effective strategies and policies to develop and create a favorable international environment.

2.1.2 Importance of international relations in the modern world

Foreign relations have evolved significantly over centuries, from the ancient empires to the modern-day, affecting worldwide interactions among nations, civilizations, and individuals.

The roots of international relations can be traced back to ancient civilizations, where diplomatic interactions, commercial networks, and treaties were used to manage different type of relations (Baylis, Smith, & Owens, 2017). The rise of empires and kingdoms heightened the necessity for diplomatic engagement, resulting in the formation of norms and conventions governing interstate relations.

Following the end of World War II, the modern era of international relations began to take shape, with the formation of international organizations such as the United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions, which aimed to foster international peace, security, and economic cooperation among nations, laying the framework for a more interconnected world. (Ikenberry, 2017)

In today's world, international relations are crucial role for tackling major global concerns and advancing common interests. One of the most important components of international relations is maintaining peace and security through diplomatic efforts, conflict resolution mechanisms, and peacekeeping operations (Baylis et al., 2017). Diplomatic dialogue and negotiation serve as critical instrument in managing conflicts and preventing confrontations between states.

Economically, international relations enable cross-border trade, investment, and development cooperation, resulting in global economic progress and prosperity (Keohane & Nye, 2020). In addition, globalization has increased economic interconnectedness, necessitating cooperation and coordination among nations to handle concerns such as trade imbalances, financial crises, and economic inequality. Furthermore, its crucial role is in promoting human rights, humanitarian aid, and social justice globally (Ikenberry, 2017).

To summarize, the importance of international relations in the modern world cannot be overstated. International relations, from its origins in ancient diplomacy to their current significance in tackling global concerns, serve as a foundation for national collaboration, dialogue, and conflict resolution. International relations help to establish a more peaceful, prosperous, and equitable world by supporting diplomatic engagement, economic cooperation, and the advancement of common values on the global stage.

2.1.3 Analysis of the current situation of foreign relations and policy.

Analyzing the current state of foreign relations and policy provides crucial insights into the dynamics shaping the global environment. In a period of geopolitical shifts, economic interdependence, and evolving security challenges, understanding the complexities of international relations is paramount for nations in order to navigate diplomatic waters effectively.

At the forefront of contemporary foreign relations is the growing trend of multipolarity, characterized by the rise of new power centers and the spread of influence across. The historic dominance of Western powers is being challenged by emerging powers such as China, India, resulting in a more diversified and fluid global order (Mearsheimer, 2019). This shifting power balance has significant implications for diplomatic engagements, alliance formations, and the resolution of international conflicts.

One of the distinguishing features of current foreign relations is the increasing prominence of multilateral organizations and diplomatic forums in influencing global governance and cooperation. Institutions such as the United Nations (UN), the European Union (EU), and the World Trade Organization (WTO) play pivotal roles in facilitating dialogue, negotiation, and collective action on a wide range of issues, from peacekeeping and humanitarian aid to trade regulation and environmental protection (Keohane & Martin, 2019). These organizations provide

vital platforms for establishing consensus, tackling common challenges, and maintaining international norms and principles.

Economic interdependence remains a distinguishing aspect of contemporary foreign relations, with globalization driving increased connectedness and integration among nations. Trade agreements, investment partnerships, and supply chain networks connect economies together, emphasizing the role of economic diplomacy in shaping international relations (Baldwin, 2019). However, this interconnectedness also exposes nations to vulnerabilities, as evidenced by the economic consequences of global pandemics and trade disputes.

Events such as the COVID-19 pandemic have had significant impact on foreign relations and policies, changing global priorities and accelerating current trends. The pandemic underscored the interconnectivity of modern societies and the importance of international cooperation in responding to transnational threats (Kickbusch et al., 2021). It highlighted the critical role of solidarity, resilience, and multilateralism in addressing public health emergencies and minimizing the socioeconomic impact of global crises.

Subsequently, current foreign relations and policies are characterized by a complex interplay of geopolitical, economic, and security dynamics. Navigating this complex landscape requires strategic foresight, diplomatic agility, and a commitment to multilateralism and cooperation. By evaluating the prevailing trends and challenges in international relations, nations can formulate informed policies and strategies to promote peace, prosperity, and security in an increasingly interconnected world.

2.2 Foreign Relations of the Republic of Kazakhstan

In this section of the thesis, I will delve into the foreign relations of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Beginning with an overview of Kazakhstan's background and historical context, I will examine the country's emergence as an independent nation and the factors shaping its foreign policy. Additionally, I will analyze Kazakhstan's foreign trade dynamics, exploring the key drivers and challenges in its trade relations with other countries, together with the impact of the war in Ukraine.

Since attaining independence in 1991, Kazakhstan has maintained a diverse foreign policy aimed at promoting regional stability, economic development, and international integration. Kazakhstan's foreign policy is focused on preserving good relations with neighboring countries while also actively interacting with international organizations such as the United Nations, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, and the Eurasian Economic Union (Zhanbulatova, 2018). Kazakhstan has also focused on broadening its foreign economic ties in order to lessen reliance on a single market (Kuzmina, 2015). This approach highlights Kazakhstan's efforts to attract foreign investment and foster economic growth by capitalizing on its strategic location and plentiful natural resources.

2.2.1 Overview of the Republic of Kazakhstan and its background

Following the Soviet Union's collapse, Central Asia emerged as a new geopolitical zone, comprising Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Kyrgyzstan. Kazakhstan stands out as the most advanced nation in Central Asia, boasting superior economic performance and the highest GDP per capita among other countries in Central Asia (International Monetary Fund, 2023). Despite its rapid development within the global landscape, Kazakhstan remains committed to preserving its distinct national and territorial identity, as well as its independence.

The Republic of Kazakhstan is a unitary state with the presidential system of government. Covering an area of 2.724 million square kilometers, the country has the ninth largest territory in the world. The country shares borders with Russia, China, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan. There are more than 5,000 deposits of mineral resources in the country, the estimated cost of which is said to be tens of trillions of dollars. Kazakhstan also has significant oil and gas resources and holds the 9th place in the world in proven oil reserves, most of which are located in the western regions. In addition, the country's uranium and coal deposits are the 2nd and the 8th largest in the world respectively. Kazakhstan exports mining products, fuel, energy, the products of metallurgical and chemical industries, along with grain. The main trade partners of the country are Russia, China, and Europe (Akorda, 2023). The detailed overview of country's foreign trade will be studied in the next part of this thesis.

Since the 2000s, Kazakhstan has seen impressive economic growth driven by the first generation of market-oriented reforms, abundant mineral resources extraction, and strong Direct Foreign Investment (FDI). Sustained economic growth has transformed the country into an upper middle-income economy, commensurately raising living standards and reducing poverty (World Bank, 2022).

2.2.2 Bilateral foreign relations of Kazakhstan

In exploring the foreign relations of Kazakhstan, particular attention is directed towards four key bilateral relationships that hold significant diplomatic, economic, and strategic implications for the country. First and foremost, the historical and complex relationship with Russia warrants thorough analysis, given Russia's historical influence, economic ties, and strategic partnership with Kazakhstan. Despite geographical distance, Kazakhstan maintains diplomatic and economic ties with the United States, emphasizing the importance of examining cooperation in areas such as security, trade, and investment. Furthermore, Kazakhstan's engagement with the European Union, spanning trade, investment, and cooperation initiatives, sheds light on its efforts to diversify economic partnerships and integrate into the global economy. Additionally, the developing relationship with China, characterized by growing trade, investment, and strategic cooperation, is essential for understanding Kazakhstan's position in regional geopolitics and economic development strategies. Together, delving into these four bilateral relationships provides a comprehensive understanding of Kazakhstan's foreign policy priorities and objectives on the international stage.

2.2.3 Foreign trade of Kazakhstan

Kazakhstan is open to international trade. According to the World Bank, the share of international trade in 2021 amounted to 58% of GDP (World Bank, 2023). Kazakhstan has an export-oriented economy that is highly dependent on shipments of oil and related products (51.5% of total exports in 2021). The country has been recording trade surpluses since 1998 mainly due to rise in shipments of oil and other commodities. In addition to oil, its main export commodities include natural gas, ferrous metals, copper, aluminum, zinc, uranium. Kazakhstan's main export products are raw materials, notably oil, petroleum products, coal, machinery, cereals, wool, and meat are other major exports. The country imports mainly machinery, nuclear reactors, boilers, electrical, electronic equipment, and radiotelephone transmitting devices (Lloyds Bank Trade, 2023).

According to data from APK-Inform (2022), Kazakhstan's main international customers are Italy (16.4% in 2022), China, and Russia, while the main suppliers are Russia (34.9% in 2022),

China, and Germany. Russia and Kazakhstan have undertaken joint projects in many areas, including energy. The government aims to improve the country's integration abroad to increase investment in the country. In the following tables 1 and 2, we can observe the dynamics of the main trade partners of the Republic of Kazakhstan in the period from 2018 to 2022.

Table 1: Main customers of Kazakhstan (Export Partner Share %)

(% of Exports)	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018
Italy	16.4%	14.7%	13.9%	14.4%	19.2%
China	15.6%	16.2%	19.7%	13.8%	10.3%
Russia	10.4%	11.6%	10.5%	9.7%	8.6%
Netherlands	6.5%	7.3%	6.6%	7.6%	10.1%
Türkiye	5.6%	4.9%	4.5%	4.2%	2.0%
South Korea	5.4%	3.1%	2.1%	5.3%	4.9%
Uzbekistan	4.4%	4.6%	4.5%	3.4%	2.7%
France	3.6%	4.0%	3.9%	6.3%	6.3%
Romania	3.0%	2.5%	2.6%	2.9%	2.5%
Spain	2.8%	2.7%	2.5%	3.7%	3.0%
India	2.2%	2.7%	4.2%	2.7%	1.6%

Source: WITS, 2024

Table 2: Main Suppliers of Kazakhstan (Import Partner Share %)

(% of Imports)	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018
Russian Federation	34.9%	42.5%	35.3%	36.0%	39.7%
China	21.9%	19.8%	16.4%	17.1%	16.2%
Germany	4.5%	4.4%	4.7%	3.7%	4.9%
United States	3.8%	3.3%	3.0%	3.4%	3.8%
Türkiye	3.2%	2.7%	2.4%	2.0%	1.9%
South Korea	3.1%	1.8%	12.6%	8.7%	2.7%
Uzbekistan	2.6%	2.5%	2.0%	3.5%	2.5%
Japan	2.3%	1.3%	1.4%	1.5%	1.5%
Italy	2.1%	1.9%	2.4%	3.9%	4.4%
France	1.8%	1.6%	2.4%	1.7%	1.9%
Poland	1.2%	0.9%	0.8%	0.8%	0.8%

Source: WITS, 2024

Table 1 provides a breakdown of Kazakhstan's main export partners over the years, with data ranked according to the last year in the period (2022) from highest to lowest. As observed from the table, the country's primary customers include China, Russia, and the EU. Conversely, Table 2 highlights Kazakhstan's main import partners, ranked using the same principle. It is evident that Russia and China remain at the top, while Italy's share in imports is notably less than its share in Kazakhstan's exports.

Tables 1 and 2 highlight Kazakhstan's efforts to build important economic and trade relationships with developed countries, marking a significant milestone in its trade history. However, it's important to note that Kazakhstan still maintains strong trade partnerships with Russia and China since its independence, mainly due to historical ties and their close geographical proximity. These lasting relationships emphasize the influence of historical connections and regional factors on Kazakhstan's trade strategy, showing its diverse approach to global economic engagement. The country's membership in different international organizations will be studied in the following parts of this thesis.

As we can observe from the Table 3, in 2022, Kazakhstan's total foreign trade amounted to 151.6 billion USD, representing an increase of 31% compared to 115,6 billion USD the previous year. The growth in trade can largely be attributed to the increased movement of freight across Eurasia from China to Europe, with the trans-Kazakh route being one of the most heavily used. Kazakh imports from China typically arrive via the same rail route and reached a value of about US\$8 billion in 2021. With these containers being offloaded in Kazakhstan, space becomes available for Kazakh goods to continue westward to Europe. Kazakhstan's Statistics Committee has reported that Kazakhstan's trade with the countries of the European Union reached 28.4 billion USD during the period from January to November 2021, marking a 25.6% increase over the 22.6 billion USD achieved during the same period in 2020 (Silk Road Briefing, 2022).

According to ODI (2022), the Russian war in the Ukraine also has had a positive impact on the value of Kazakhstan's exports. From January to September 2022, exports from Kazakhstan amounted to \$65.8 billion, 47.5% higher than in the same period of 2021. This was largely explained by the increase in commodity prices, with only a marginal increase in the volume of exports itself. Exports from Kazakhstan to Russia demonstrated 16% growth, reaching \$5.9 billion during the first nine months of 2022, while imports increased only marginally by 3%, up to \$12.4 billion. The share of steel and steel products went down by 20.7% year on year from 1.3 to 1.0 million tons (from \$1.2 billion to \$0.8 billion) as of the end of October 2022, whereas the export of smartphones has increased from \$37k to \$78 million during the first half of 2022. Exports to China have increased by 43%, amounting to \$10.3 billion.

Table 3: Foreign trade values of Kazakhstan from 2018 to 2022

Foreign Trade Values (in million USD)	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Imports of Goods	32,534	37,757	37,222	41,171	49,586
Exports of Goods	60,956	57,309	46,447	60,625	84,663
Imports of Services	12,082	11,541	8,446	7,907	9,416
Exports of Services	7,320	7,754	5,208	5,887	7,923

Source: World Trade Organisation (WTO), 2023

2.2.4 Kazakhstan's position in global politics

Here I will analyze the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) of Kazakhstan's position in global politics.

Table 4: SWOT analysis of Kazakhstan's position in world politics

Strengths
Geopolitical location
Natural resources
Multilateral engagement
Stable governance
Weaknesses
Authoritarian tendencies
Economic dependence on natural resources
Ethnic tensions
Limited regional influence
Infrastructure and development gaps
Opportunities
Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)
Economic diversification
Regional integration
Diplomatic mediation
Enhanced international partnerships

Threats
Regional instability
External interference
Terrorism and extremism
Environmental
Global economic downturns

Source: Akorda, 2023

Now, let me direct the attention to a more detailed examination of each component of the table.

Strengths

Kazakhstan's strategic geopolitical location at the crossroads of Europe and Asia grants it significant importance, enabling the country to act as a bridge between the East and the West. Its vast reserves of natural resources, particularly oil, gas, and minerals, bolster its economic and political leverage on the global stage. Actively engaging in various international organizations and initiatives, including the United Nations, OSCE, and SCO, Kazakhstan wields influence and builds alliances. Furthermore, the country's stable governance, under the leadership of President Nursultan Nazarbayev and subsequently President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, enhances its credibility and attractiveness to international partners. Additionally, Kazakhstan's advocacy for nuclear disarmament and its leadership in promoting non-proliferation initiatives have garnered respect and influence in international diplomatic circles (Akorda, 2023).

Weaknesses

Despite its strengths, Kazakhstan faces several challenges. Concerns over authoritarian tendencies, including limitations on political freedoms such as freedom of speech and assembly, could tarnish its reputation among democratic nations. Moreover, the economy's heavy reliance on natural resource exports renders it vulnerable to fluctuations in global commodity prices, hindering diversification efforts. Ethnic tensions within its diverse population pose potential threats to national unity and stability, while competition from other Central Asian countries and larger powers like Russia and China may limit Kazakhstan's regional influence. Additionally, disparities in infrastructure and socio-economic development persist, impeding progress and equality.

Opportunities

According to Akorda (2023), Kazakhstan has ample opportunities for growth and development. Participation in China's Belt and Road Initiative offers prospects for infrastructure development, trade expansion, and increased connectivity with global markets. Efforts to diversify

the economy beyond natural resources present opportunities for investment in sectors such as agriculture, technology, and renewable energy, fostering sustainable growth. Leveraging its position as a key player in Central Asia, Kazakhstan can promote regional cooperation, trade liberalization, and security collaboration, enhancing its influence and stability. Additionally, its reputation for diplomatic mediation allows Kazakhstan to facilitate dialogue and resolve conflicts, while strengthening ties with global powers and emerging economies opens avenues for investment, technology transfer, and knowledge exchange.

Threats

Despite the opportunities, Kazakhstan faces several threats to its stability and development. Regional instability stemming from conflicts in neighboring regions, external interference from geopolitical powers, and the threat of terrorism and extremism pose significant security challenges. Environmental risks, including desertification, water scarcity, and pollution, threaten public health, agricultural productivity, and ecosystem resilience. Moreover, global economic downturns and market uncertainties in major economies could dampen demand for Kazakhstan's exports, weaken investor confidence, and impede diversification efforts, exacerbating socioeconomic challenges.

Kazakhstan's strengths include its geographical location, which provides the country with ample opportunities for trade with many countries in Eurasia. In addition, Kazakhstan's increasing role in world affairs and its successful membership in the UN Security Council are important factors that confirm the country's political importance. It is also worth noting Kazakhstan's wealth of oil and natural gas, which is a significant resource for economic development.

On the other hand, Kazakhstan's weaknesses are related to its economic dependence on Russia and China and certain vulnerabilities in the country's development model, which may hinder sustainable development.

At the same time, opportunities for Kazakhstan include new oil deposits, which may contribute to economic growth, as well as a transition to a more sustainable, private sector-based development model, which may help to develop the economy and reduce vulnerabilities.

Overall, Kazakhstan's strategic location, resource wealth, and diplomatic initiatives provide a strong foundation for its engagement in world politics, but it must address internal weaknesses, seize opportunities, and navigate external threats to effectively leverage its potential and safeguard its interests on the global stage.

2.2.5 Kazakhstan's Foreign Policy Orientations

The foundations of Kazakhstan's foreign policy were laid by Nursultan Nazarbayev in May 1992 in his policy article titled "Strategy for the Formation and Development of Kazakhstan as a

Sovereign State.” It proclaimed the security of the new Kazakhstan as the main goal of its foreign policy. Security was to be ensured, among other things, by a strategic partnership with neighbors—Russia and China—as well as close cooperation with Central Asian states, Turkey, Pakistan, and India (Nazarbayev, 1992). This foreign policy imperative, implying an orientation to several centers of power, was later called a multi-vector approach. A multi-vector policy is characteristic to some degree of many post-Soviet states.

In this chapter, I will delve into the foreign policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan. I will examine the key principles, objectives, and priorities of Kazakhstan's foreign policy, as well as its diplomatic engagements on regional and global platforms.

2.2.5.1 Multi-vector approach

Despite Kazakhstan’s de facto adherence to a multi-vector policy throughout its existence, for the first time it was officially designated as a concept in 2007 in a presidential address to the nation (Poslanie, 2007). From then on, a multi-vector approach would be described as the main principle of Kazakhstan’s Foreign Policy Concepts adopted in 2014 and 2020 (Kontseptiya, 2014, O Kontseptii, 2020). This foreign policy is defined in official doctrines as “a diplomatic strategy based on building relations with the international community in general and with the neighboring states in particular on a pragmatic and balanced basis” (O Kontseptsii, 2020). However, a multi-vector approach represents a means for all former Soviet states to affirm their sovereignty in relation to Russia. This strategy entails building stronger economic and political connections with alternative centers of influence, thereby diminishing Russia's ability to sway the country's foreign and domestic policies. In this context, a multi-vector policy essentially denotes a strategy of equilibrium concerning Russia.

According to the Concept of Foreign Policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2020-2030, Kazakhstan aims to achieve the following foreign policy goals:

- Acknowledgment of the current international landscape, which is characterized by a crisis of confidence, erosion of international law, and the emergence of geopolitical and geoeconomics factors.
- Pursuance of a foreign policy grounded in principles of continuity, stability, external openness, multi-vector approach, multilateralism, and the inseparable link between security and development.
- Strategic goals include reinforcing independence, enhancing regional leadership, contributing to international stability, fostering mutually beneficial relations, bolstering economic competitiveness, preserving national unity, and prioritizing citizens' interests.

- Priorities encompass maintaining international peace and security, advancing economic diplomacy, promoting human rights and environmental protection, and strengthening regional and multilateral diplomacy.
- Implementation involves coordinated efforts among state bodies, diplomatic missions, intergovernmental commissions, and public engagement to achieve foreign policy objectives.

Over a ten-year period, the Concept aims to strengthen Kazakhstan's independence, enhance security, foster international cooperation, boost economic integration, and raise public awareness of foreign policy initiatives (O Kontseptsii, 2020).

At the same time, the concept was supplemented with new principles of the country's foreign policy. One of these principles is the promotion of a stable and democratic world order. The State also endeavours to promote external openness and to develop an inseparable link between security and development at all levels of international relations. Some of the former principles have been given a broader interpretation. For example, the equality of all states of the world is presented as equal integration into the world political, economic and humanitarian space. Collective resolution of international problems and conflicts is seen as multilateralism, which aims to develop a collective vision and effective approaches of the international community to solve a wide range of global and regional problems through multilateral consultations and agreements.

According to Tokayev, on one hand, it is evident that the country is carefully observing and taking into account the ongoing processes in global and regional politics. On the other hand, in a situation that is ambiguous in the international arena, it is important and advantageous for it to position itself as "an active and responsible participant in the international community, making a significant contribution to international and regional stability and security", aimed at maintaining friendly and mutually beneficial relations with its foreign partners. That is why multi-vectorism and pragmatism, which allow Kazakhstan to build relations with other countries and international organizations in accordance with its interests and on the basis of mutual respect, remain the key principles of its foreign policy (K.-J. Tokayev, 2020).

However, the conflict in Ukraine has reshaped Kazakhstan's multi-vector foreign policy strategy. Initially aimed at gaining international recognition and attracting foreign investment, the policy's emphasis has shifted towards reducing reliance on Russia. Despite no evident decrease in Russia's influence in Kazakhstan or a notable rise in influence from other regional powers, the government has implemented a distinct hedging strategy. This strategy aims to optimize geopolitical advantages and strengthen Kazakhstan's sovereignty (Dumoulin, 2023).

2.2.5.2 PEST analysis of Kazakhstan's foreign policy

To gain a comprehensive understanding of the foreign policy concept outlined by the Republic of Kazakhstan for the years 2020-2030, I will conduct a PEST analysis. PEST analysis stands for Political, Economic, Social, and Technological factors, and it provides a framework for assessing the external influences that may impact an organization or, in this case, a country's foreign policy objectives.

Table 5: PEST analysis of Kazakhstan's foreign policy for the period between 2020 and 2030

Factor	Main Points
Political Factors	Domestic Political Stability Government Priorities and Policies
Economic Factors	Economic Diversification Trade and Investment Opportunities
Social Factors	Ethnic Diversity and Social Cohesion Human Rights and Diplomatic Image
Technological Factors	Technological Innovation Digital Diplomacy

Source: Concept of Foreign Policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2020-2030

Now, I will provide an understanding of each point within the factor:

Political Factors

Domestic Political Stability: Kazakhstan's foreign policy is significantly influenced by its domestic political stability. The country has experienced relative political stability under the leadership of President Nursultan Nazarbayev and subsequent President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev.

Government Priorities and Policies: The political priorities and policies of the Kazakh government play a crucial role in shaping its foreign relations. The government's focus on economic diversification, regional integration, and maintaining good relations with neighboring countries influences its foreign policy decisions.

Economic Factors

Economic Diversification: Kazakhstan aims to diversify its economy away from dependence on natural resources, particularly oil and gas, to reduce vulnerability to commodity price fluctuations and foster sustainable growth.

Trade and Investment Opportunities: Kazakhstan's strategic location and abundant energy resources present significant trade and investment opportunities. The country seeks to attract foreign investment, expand trade ties, and participate in international economic initiatives.

Social Factors

Ethnic Diversity and Social Cohesion: Kazakhstan's diverse population shapes its foreign policy approach. The government emphasizes promoting social cohesion and national unity while addressing the needs of different ethnic communities.

Human Rights and Diplomatic Image: Kazakhstan's human rights record and diplomatic image influence its foreign policy standing. Efforts to improve human rights protections and enhance democratic governance contribute to its reputation on the global stage.

Technological Factors

Digital Diplomacy: Kazakhstan incorporates digital diplomacy initiatives to engage with foreign audiences, promote its interests, and showcase technological advancements.

Technological Innovation: Kazakhstan focuses on fostering technological innovation and development to drive economic growth and enhance competitiveness. Embracing emerging technologies enhances its position in the global technology landscape.

2.2.6 Current international environment and Kazakhstan

For Kazakhstan, a pivotal Central Asian country, understanding and navigating the current complex international environment within global context is essential for shaping its foreign policy and addressing both opportunities and challenges. This section explores the current international environment and its implications for Kazakhstan.

In spite of the fact that Kazakhstan attained its independence relatively recently, it actively participates in regional integration initiatives, particularly through its membership in the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). These platforms offer opportunities for economic cooperation, trade expansion, and regional security collaboration among member states (Kassenova, 2017). By participating in regional integration initiatives, Kazakhstan strengthens its position as a significant player in Eurasia and enhances its connectivity with neighboring countries.

Also, by pursuing a multi-vector foreign policy, Kazakhstan maintains diplomatic relations with both Eastern and Western countries. This strategy enables Kazakhstan to diversify its partnerships, reduce reliance on any single actor, and leverage opportunities for economic, political, and security cooperation (Kassenova, 2017).

Aside from that, Kazakhstan faces geopolitical challenges because of its proximity to conflict-prone zones, including Afghanistan, the Middle East, and Ukraine. Managing these

tensions involves a delicate balancing act in order to protect national security, promote regional stability, and prevent spillover effects from neighboring conflicts (Olcott, 2017). To avoid geopolitical risks, Kazakhstan prioritizes constructive engagement and conflict resolution measures.

Despite efforts to diversify its economy, Kazakhstan continues to rely heavily on the extractive sector, particularly oil and gas. Economic diversification is essential to reduce exposure to commodity price fluctuations, stimulate non-oil sectors, and foster sustainable long-term growth (World Bank, 2018). Kazakhstan's economic diversification strategy includes investments in infrastructure, education, innovation, and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to promote economic resilience and competitiveness.

Kazakhstan's involvement in international organizations is an important part of its foreign policy (Malysheva, 2023). Kazakhstan has actively pursued membership in many international organizations to improve its global status, maintain regional stability, and advance its national objectives. Furthermore, the emphasis on Kazakhstan's involvement in regional integration programs is critical. Kazakhstan's involvement in organizations like the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) demonstrates its commitment to regional economic cooperation and integration with neighboring countries (Shojonov, 2023). These affiliations reflect Kazakhstan's diverse foreign policy strategy, which involves participation with both global and regional organizations to further its diplomatic, economic, and security goals.

Kazakhstan faces a complicated set of opportunities and challenges in navigating the current international environment. By actively engaging in regional integration efforts, diversifying its partnerships, and leveraging energy diplomacy, Kazakhstan seeks to enhance its regional and global influence. However, geopolitical tensions, economic diversification, and security threats all pose significant challenges that necessitate proactive measures and strategic responses. Through prudent diplomacy, economic reforms, and security cooperation, Kazakhstan intends to navigate the complexities of the international arena and advance its national interests in the twenty-first century.

3 Practical Part

3.1 Kazakhstan's foreign relations with Russia

The relationship between Kazakhstan and Russia holds profound historical significance and continues to significantly influence the geopolitical landscape of Central Asia. This chapter explores the complex interactions and diverse aspects of the bilateral relationship between these neighboring nations. Kazakhstan and Russia have a deep-rooted history characterized by centuries of cultural, economic, and political interactions. Spanning from the days of the Russian Empire through the Soviet era and into Kazakhstan's independence, the relationship between these two countries has been intricate. Additionally, this chapter will analyze the impact of the war in Ukraine on Kazakhstan, recognizing the interconnectedness of regional dynamics and the implications for Kazakhstan's economy and geopolitical positioning.

Background

Since independence, the Kazakh-Russian relationship has been a defining one for Kazakhstan. As long as Russia continues to exist as a single sovereign state, Kazakhstan's domestic and foreign policies will continue to be formed partly in Russia's shadow. But, while Russia has sometimes been a troublesome neighbor for the Kazakhs, overall, the relationship between Kazakhstan and Russia has been much smoother than most expected. This is due in large part to the skill with which Kazakhstan's leaders have handled their Russian interlocutors, in bilateral and multilateral settings, and to Kazakhstan's success in maintaining a multi-vector foreign policy (Olcott, n.d.).

Diplomatic relations between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Kazakhstan were established on October 22, 1992 (The Embassy of the Russian Federation to the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2018). To date, the countries have concluded more than 350 separate treaties and agreements covering various fields (Tass, 2023).

Trade and Economic Relations

According to the Kazakh Ministry of Trade and Integration (2024), the volume of bilateral trade between Kazakhstan and Russia for January-August 2023 exceeded \$17 bln, with exports from Kazakhstan to Russia during this period rising by 21.4% to \$6.4 bln, and imports to Kazakhstan from Russia declining by 8.2% year-on-year (\$10.6 bln).

The main items within the bilateral trade turnover are industrial equipment; mineral, metals, and chemical products; and foodstuffs and agricultural raw materials (Kazakh Ministry of Trade and Integration, 2024).

According to TASS (2023), there are over 11,000 collaborative ventures between Russia and Kazakhstan across various economic sectors. Joint initiatives span industries such as automotive manufacturing, aviation, advanced oil refining, and agricultural processing. Nearly all

prominent Russian companies, including Rosatom, Gazprom, Lukoil, Rusal, Kamaz, Sberbank, Beeline, and EuroChem, have established a presence in Kazakhstan. Over the last 15 years, direct investment from Russia into Kazakhstan's economy has reached an estimated \$17 billion, while Kazakh investment in Russia amounts to approximately \$4.5 billion.

Furthermore, the two countries are engaged in numerous joint ventures spanning various sectors such as space exploration, oil and gas, and nuclear energy. Additionally, they collaborate on interregional and humanitarian initiatives, underscoring the breadth and depth of their bilateral cooperation.

3.1.1 War in Ukraine

Following Russia's sudden invasion of Ukraine, there has been a significant shift in the geopolitical dynamics of Central Asia. Countries in the area are now realizing the consequences of aligning too closely with Russia, which may lead to isolation. It is increasingly evident that, in the evolving global order, maintaining ties with Russia could result in economic and political isolation, a risk that rapidly developing Central Asian nations cannot take (Matussek, 2023). Therefore, it is essential to examine the consequences of the ongoing conflict in Ukraine on Kazakhstan, considering the intricate connections with both countries involved in the war.

3.1.2 Kazakhstan's diplomatic balancing act

Overall, Kazakhstan is endeavoring to distance itself from the impacts of Russia's conflict with Ukraine while aiming to maintain financial and economic stability. Given Russia's re-invasion of Ukraine and the subsequent imposition of Western sanctions on Russia and Belarus, Kazakhstan, as a member of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) with extensive trade ties and a lengthy border with Russia, is experiencing notable consequences (Trade.gov, 2022).

The prompt reaction of the government to Russia's invasion of Ukraine provided reassurance to many in the Western countries. There were concerns following the events of January 2022, referred to as 'Bloody January' in Kazakhstan, that the nation might draw closer to Russia. However, as early as March 28, the deputy foreign minister, Roman Vasilenko, announced that Kazakhstan did not wish to "find itself behind a new iron curtain", underlining that the country had no intention of being aligned with Russia and risking being subjected to Western sanctions (Dumoulin, 2023).

In a public discussion with Vladimir Putin at the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum in June 2022, Tokayev made it very clear that his country remained committed to the principle of territorial integrity and therefore would not recognize the 'quasi-states' of Donetsk and Luhansk (En.Inform.kz, 2022).

The effects of the war on Kazakhstan's economy

The conflict in Ukraine has highlighted Kazakhstan's vulnerability to the Russian economy. Within the initial fortnight of the conflict, Kazakhstan experienced a significant depreciation of its currency, the tenge, by 20 percent against the dollar, mirroring the decline of the Russian ruble.

Russia's suspension of certain exports to the countries of the Eurasian Economic Union in order to secure its own market, announced on 10 March, had an immediate impact on the prices and availability of a number of basic foodstuffs in Kazakhstan, demonstrating the country's heavy dependency on its neighbor. Furthermore, Russia's repeated suspension of pipelines used for Kazakhstan's oil exports throughout 2022, interpreted by many as a response to Kazakhstan distancing itself from Russia's invasion of Ukraine, exacerbated the situation. However, some observers suggested that these suspensions might have been a reaction to Western sanctions or a tactic to undermine Western companies operating in Kazakhstan's Caspian Sea oil fields (Dumoulin, 2023).

The economic consequences of the war on Kazakhstan have presented a mixed picture. On one hand, the surge in prices for various imported goods like food, consumer products, gas, and refined oil has directly affected the purchasing power of the population, potentially impacting the social situation. According to Dumoulin (2023), in December 2022, inflation exceeded 20 per cent over one year, which was the highest increase in the last 25 years. On the other hand, Kazakhstan experienced a 22 percent rise in exports to Russia during the initial ten months of 2022, sparking concerns that Kazakhstan might be inadvertently facilitating the circumvention of certain Western sanctions, despite its stated assurances to the contrary.

Summary

Kazakhstan, historically intertwined with Russia, is navigating its ties with Moscow amid the conflict, striving to maintain stability while distancing itself from the impacts of Russia's actions. Despite their deep-rooted history and economic interdependence, Kazakhstan is seeking to assert its sovereignty and mitigate potential risks associated with its proximity to Russia.

In the immediate term, Kazakhstan is experiencing advantages from elevated oil prices due to its status as a net exporter of commodities. Nevertheless, the anticipated rise in food prices is expected to disproportionately affect the country's vulnerable communities, given that food constitutes a substantial portion of the average household expenditure.

In the long run, Kazakhstan's outlook will hinge on the effectiveness of measures to control inflation, the adjustment of alternative transport routes, and the exploration of new trade avenues. Additionally, the duration of businesses relocating from Russia and Belarus to Kazakhstan will play a significant role in shaping the country's future prospects.

3.2 Kazakhstan's foreign relations with the USA

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Kazakhstan declared its independence on December 25, 1991, with the United States being the first country to acknowledge it. Over the years following Kazakhstan's independence, both nations have cultivated a robust and diverse bilateral relationship, officially termed an enhanced strategic partnership since 2018 (State.gov, 2023).

In 1993, Kazakhstan took a leadership role in nuclear non-proliferation by renouncing its Soviet-era nuclear arsenal and closing the Semipalatinsk Test Site (STS). With U.S. assistance, Kazakhstan disposed of nuclear warheads, materials, and infrastructure. By 1995, all nuclear warheads were eliminated, and by May 2000, 181 test tunnels at the STS were closed. This cooperation became a cornerstone of U.S.-Kazakh relations (State.gov, 2023).

Kazakhstan's imports from the United States totaled \$1.1 billion in 2022, up 34.1 percent (\$274 million) from 2021 and up 22 percent from 2012, according to the Office of the United States Trade Representative (n.d.). The main imports from the U.S. in 2022 were machinery, nuclear reactors and boilers, electrical and electronic equipment, vehicles, articles of iron and steel, pharmaceuticals, mineral fuels and oil, plastics, and aircraft parts. U.S. goods imports from Kazakhstan totaled \$2.7 billion in 2022, up 57.7 percent (\$990 million) from 2021, and up 73 percent from 2012. The U.S. goods trade deficit with Kazakhstan was \$1.6 billion in 2022, a 78.7 percent increase (\$716 million) over 2021.

Kazakhstan is the 81st largest trading partner of the United States, with a total of \$3.8 billion in two-way trade in 2022. U.S. firms have invested tens of billions of dollars in Kazakhstan, concentrated in the oil and gas sector. Kazakhstan has made some progress in creating a favorable investment climate, although serious problems remain, including corruption and arbitrary enforcement of laws and contracts (State.gov, 2023).

The United States has emerged as one of Kazakhstan's foremost partners, demonstrating a substantial commitment to mutual economic growth. The U.S. stands as the second-largest investor in Kazakhstan's economy. As we can observe from Figure 1, since 2013, the Republic of Kazakhstan has witnessed a remarkable influx of direct investments from the U.S., totaling an impressive \$39 billion. Notably, in 2022, FDI from the U. S. surged by 82% compared to the previous year, reaching \$5.1 billion, following a strong inflow of \$2.8 billion in 2021 (Kazakh Invest, 2023).

Table 6: Top 10 investor countries of Kazakhstan over the period from 2013 to 2022

TOP 10 INVESTOR COUNTRIES (2013-2022)	
The Netherlands	69.7 billion USD
USA	38.9 billion USD
Switzerland	24.7 billion USD
China	14.9 billion USD
Russia	13.7 billion USD
Belgium	9.9 billion USD
France	8.9 billion USD
UK	7.3 billion USD
South Korea	6.2 billion USD
Japan	3.6 billion USD

Source: UNCTAD World Investment Report, 2023

Figure 1: Global FDI inflow to Kazakhstan



Source: UNCTAD World Investment Report, 2023

As of January 2023, 607 joint ventures and companies with U.S. capital have established operations in the Republic of Kazakhstan. These include industry giants such as Chevron, General Electric, Microsoft, EPAM, Wabtec, PepsiCo, Pfizer, Honeywell, and a host of other influential entities. These American corporations have not only contributed to Kazakhstan's economic landscape but have also fostered technological innovation and job creation (Kazakh Invest, 2023).

To conclude, Kazakhstan and the U.S. have opportunities to establish mutually advantageous collaborations across diverse fields. Through the exploration of fresh avenues for cooperation and the strengthening of current connections, both nations can bolster their competitiveness, foster economic expansion, and bolster regional progress.

3.3 Kazakhstan's foreign relations with EU

The European Union and Kazakhstan have been partners since the country's independence in 1991. In December 2015, the European Union and Kazakhstan signed an Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (EPCA). This new Agreement, the first of its kind with a Central Asian partner, brought relations between the EU and Kazakhstan to a new level and represented an important milestone in more than 25 years of EU-Kazakhstan relations. The EPCA enables the EU and its Member States to advance and strengthen cooperation with Kazakhstan in key policy areas such as promoting mutual trade and investment, cooperation in justice and home affairs, economic and financial cooperation, energy, transport, environment and climate change, employment and social affairs, culture, education, and research (EEAS, 2023).

Cooperation with the European Union (EU) stands as a cornerstone of Kazakhstan's balanced and pragmatic multi-vector foreign policy, as highlighted by Kazakh Deputy Foreign Minister Roman Vassilenko. With the EU emerging as Kazakhstan's largest trade and investment partner, comprising approximately 40% of the country's foreign trade and 45% of attracted investments since 2005, its significance cannot be overstated. Notably, from January to November 2023, the trade turnover between Kazakhstan and the EU amounted to \$37.7 billion, reflecting a 3.2% increase compared to the same period in 2022, with exports reaching \$28.1 billion and imports at \$9.6 billion (Satubaldina, 2024).

In the first three quarters of 2023, direct foreign investment inflow from the EU hit \$7.8 billion, marking a 9% decrease compared to the same period in 2022. The influx of foreign direct investment from the EU to Kazakhstan in 2022 amounted to \$12.5 billion, showing a 23% increase from the 2021 figure. The major share of these investments from EU countries comes from the Netherlands, Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Cyprus, and Luxembourg (Satubaldina, 2024).

During the 13th meeting of the "Kazakhstan-European Union" dialogue platform chaired by Prime Minister Alikhan Smailov in Astana, he mentioned that the European Union is the largest trade and investment partner of Kazakhstan. The total volume of European investments exceeded \$175 billion (Primeminister.kz, 2023). Smailov added that today more than 3 thousand European companies, including such major transnational corporations as Shell, Eni, Air Liquide, Alstom and Claas, are successfully working in various sectors of the economy of Kazakhstan. He also stated

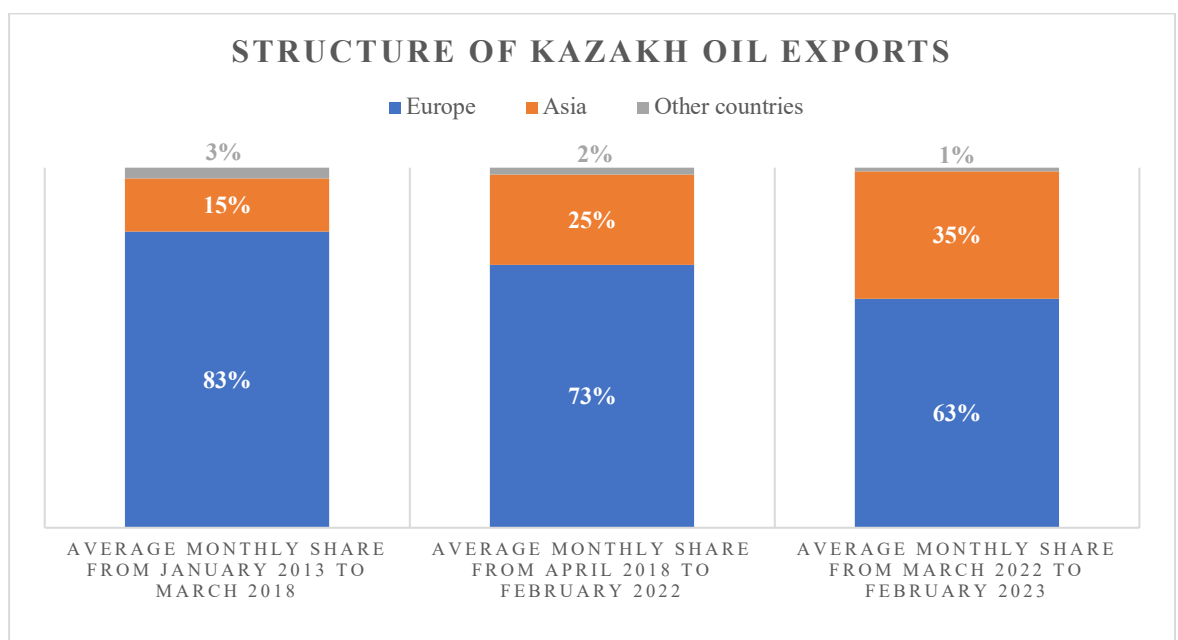
that the growing presence of European companies in Kazakhstan indicates a clear rise in the republic's investment attractiveness.

On the other hand, an Andrea Schmitz, an expert from SWP (German Institute for International and Security Affairs) (2024), emphasizes that the multi-vector foreign policy of Kazakhstan has not been as successful as hoped for. She explains this primarily by pointing out that the oligarchic elite, which has formed over almost three decades of President Nursultan Nazarbayev's rule, has been overly focused on quick profits from raw material exports. Moreover, she notes that insufficient attention has been paid to creating value-added chains and providing systematic support for small and medium-sized enterprises.

Nevertheless, according to Schmitz (2024), after Russia invaded Ukraine and found itself under international sanctions, renewed interest in Kazakhstan has been observed from the EU. This has given new impetus to the country's efforts to diversify its economy. The leadership aims to reduce dependence on raw oil exports and transportation routes passing through Russia and is actively seeking investment in renewable energy and manufacturing, particularly in the mining sector.

As discussed earlier in this thesis, Kazakhstan's economy heavily relies on its oil industry, alongside coal and uranium extraction, and other significant raw materials. Kazakhstan plays a crucial role as a major energy provider to the EU, helping to diversify the sources of energy for EU markets. As stated by Economic Research Institute (2023), Kazakhstan exports roughly 4.5-6 million tons of oil every month, with the European Union (EU) remaining the key buyer, which can be observed in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Structure of Kazakh oil exports for 2018-2023



Source: Economic Research Institute of Kazakhstan, 2023

As demonstrated in Figure 2, the average monthly share of the European countries went down from 83 percent in March 2018 to 63 percent in February 2023. However, we cannot assume that EU countries have reduced their oil imports. For instance, Germany, the largest importer of Kazakh oil, purchased 86.3 million tons in 2022, which is nearly 7 million tons more than in 2021. Similarly, the Netherlands, as the second largest importer, increased its purchases from 68 to 96.9 million tons, while France acquired between 36.3 to 43.6 million tons in respective years (ERI, 2023). The decline in an average share comes from Kazakhstan's increased oil exports to Asian countries, especially China, India, South Korea, and Türkiye.

In summary, despite not sharing a common geographical area, the relationship between the EU and Kazakhstan is evolving with a forward-looking approach. Advancing towards deeper cooperation signifies a gradual progression in their ties. Both parties are currently endeavoring to strengthen their relationship by embracing fundamental principles like 'the rule of law'. Through the EU's assistance in bolstering the rule of law, Kazakhstan is prepared to align more closely with European nations, provided that upholding 'shared values' remains pivotal in fostering robust bilateral relations. Consequently, it can be inferred that the partnership between Kazakhstan and the EU has reached a level of maturity, as they shift their focus from purely economic affairs to embracing mutual ethical outlooks.

Additionally, EU fully respects Kazakhstan's decision not to take sides in Russia's war against Ukraine. According to EEAS (2023), EU works jointly with Kazakhstan in order to prevent the use of its territory as a platform for the circumvention of EU sanctions imposed on Russia. An intensive dialogue is going on in this respect on both political and technical level.

3.4 Kazakhstan's foreign relations with China

The diplomatic ties between Kazakhstan and China represent a pivotal aspect of Kazakhstan's foreign policy landscape. Dating back to the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1992 (Gov.kz, 2022), the relationship between these two nations has steadily evolved, encompassing various dimensions ranging from economic cooperation to cultural exchange and strategic partnerships.

Kazakhstan, endowed with abundant natural resources and a strategic geographical location in Central Asia, has attracted significant attention from China, a global economic powerhouse. As China embarks on ambitious projects such as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), Kazakhstan finds itself at the crossroads of regional connectivity and economic integration.

This part of the thesis delves into the intricate dynamics of Kazakhstan-China relations, examining the historical context, economic collaborations, geopolitical implications, and future

prospects of this strategic partnership. By exploring the nuances of this relationship, I aim to gain insights into how both countries navigate their shared interests, address challenges, and contribute to regional stability and prosperity.

Trade and Economic Cooperation

According to the State Revenue Committee of the Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Kazakhstan, by the end of 2023, the volume of bilateral trade amounted to \$31.5 billion (+ 30%), including Kazakhstan's exports - \$14.7 billion (+ 12.6%) and imports - \$16.8 billion (+ 50.5%). According to the General Customs Directorate of China, trade turnover in 2023 amounted to \$41 billion (+ 32.2%), including Kazakhstan's exports - \$16.3 billion (+ 9.9%) and imports - \$24.7 billion (+ 52.8%) (Gov.kz, 2022).

China, particularly given its expanding influence in the area, holds a central position in Kazakhstan's multi-vector foreign policy approach. Within this strategy, Astana proactively interacts with China, Russia, Turkey, the European Union, the United States, and other stakeholders to prevent overreliance on any single dominant force. Kazakhstan's developing ties with China are significant but will be just one component of the broader array of relationships it has cultivated with various partners (Schulz, 2022).

According to OEC (2024), the bilateral trade between Kazakhstan and China has surged significantly, driven by the enhancement of overland transit routes facilitated by funding initiatives from the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB). In 2019, Kazakhstan's exports to China reached \$7.92 billion, establishing China as Kazakhstan's second largest trading partner. In the same year, imports from China amounted to \$9.8 billion, making Kazakhstan China's 40th largest trading partner globally. Kazakhstan is China's second-largest trading partner in the region, after Turkmenistan.

Belt and Road Initiative

Referred to as a crucial component of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), Kazakhstan's strategic location and strong economic connections position it as a pivotal element in China's aspirations for overland economic expansion. Kazakhstan officially joined the BRI in 2013, shortly after the initiative was introduced in Astana (Groening, 2020). Additionally, Kazakhstan became a founding member of AIIB in 2014, further strengthening its economic ties with China and creating avenues for substantial Chinese investment opportunities (AKI Press, 2014). Presently, there are 21 ongoing BRI projects in Kazakhstan, amounting to \$12.07 billion. China ranks among the top five largest foreign investors in Kazakhstan, with approximately 700 joint ventures between Kazakhstani and Chinese enterprises, contributing to 4.7 percent of total investments in the country (Shayakhmetova, 2021).

Despite the surge in bilateral investment and trade, some underlying challenges associated with the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) were exposed. While rail transport has gained traction as part of global transit routes, it remains a small fraction compared to sea routes, which are more cost-effective. Additionally, a significant number of cargo trains traveling from Europe to China via Kazakhstan return empty, partly due to China's subsidies for these trips and the broader trade imbalance with the rest of the world (Serikaliyeva et al., 2018). According to Schulz (2022), the recognition of these limitations in Chinese-financed BRI projects could deter Kazakhstan and other regional governments from further involvement with China. As a result, Astana may leverage revenue generated from its lucrative hydrocarbon sector to seek alternative sources for project financing by collaborating with other trade partners.

Summary

Kazakhstan holds an important position in China's Belt and Road Initiative, benefiting from its expansive territory and strategic connections with Russia, the other Central Asian republics, and the Caspian Sea have highlighted Kazakhstan's importance for China. While aiming to ascend as a modern, influential player on the global stage, Kazakhstan is mindful of the necessity to diversify its trade partners. Government's adoption of a multi-vector foreign policy has been instrumental in shifting Kazakhstan away from reliance on a single regional power toward a more balanced engagement with various global actors to fulfill its foreign policy objectives. China stands as Kazakhstan's large trading partner and a significant source of foreign investment, yet an excessive dependence on Chinese investments could pose risks to Kazakhstan's economy should Beijing choose to reduce its economic involvement.

4 Conclusion

The exploration of the foreign relations of the Republic of Kazakhstan has been the central focus of this thesis. It embarked on a comprehensive journey to comprehend Kazakhstan's position in the global arena, examining its diplomatic initiatives, strategic partnerships, and contributions to global governance during a specific period.

This thesis has aimed to delve into the complexities of Kazakhstan's foreign relations throughout a specific period, shedding light on its position in global affairs and the impacts of the ongoing conflicts. Through a comprehensive exploration of objectives and methodologies, the study has provided significant insights into Kazakhstan's diplomatic initiatives and strategic partnerships.

The theoretical part of this thesis laid the framework by providing an overview of Kazakhstan's foreign relations, delving into the fundamental concepts of international diplomacy, and elucidating the core tenets of Kazakhstan's foreign policy. This part of the thesis outlined Kazakhstan's diplomatic engagements, the underlying principles guiding its foreign policy decisions, and the overarching goals and objectives driving its interactions on the global stage.

In the subsequent chapters, the thesis transitioned to a more practical examination of Kazakhstan's foreign relations. Employing a variety of research methods including document analysis, SWOT analysis, PEST analysis, basic statistical methods, and comparison, the study delved into the intricacies of Kazakhstan's foreign relations landscape.

The synthesis of theoretical insights with empirical data facilitated a nuanced understanding of Kazakhstan's foreign relations. By examining Kazakhstan's interactions with international organizations, regional actors, and major powers, the thesis provided valuable insights into its positioning within the international community and its pursuit of national objectives on the global arena. Ultimately, the findings of this thesis underscore the significance of Kazakhstan's role in shaping the global geopolitical landscape. Kazakhstan's diplomatic engagements emerge as critical components of its engagement with the international community.

Regarding the perspectives of Kazakhstani foreign relations, it reflects a comprehensive approach that encompasses economic, security, diplomatic, and cultural dimensions. Kazakhstan aims to assert its presence on the global stage, promote its national interests, and contribute to regional and international peace, stability, and prosperity through proactive and pragmatic foreign policy engagements.

In conclusion, this thesis has achieved its objectives by providing a comprehensive analysis of Kazakhstan's foreign relations during the specified period. By combining theoretical frameworks with empirical data, the study has contributed to a deeper understanding of Kazakhstan's diplomatic priorities, strategic partnerships, and aspirations for the future.

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7 List of Abbreviations

- AIIB - Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank
- BRI - Belt and Road Initiative
- CIS - Commonwealth of Independent States
- CSTO - Collective Security Treaty Organization
- EAEU - Eurasian Economic Union
- EPCA - Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement
- ERI - Economic Resilience Initiative
- EU - European Union
- EEAS - European External Action Service
- FDI - Foreign Direct Investment
- GDP - Gross Domestic Product
- OIC - Organization of Islamic Cooperation
- ODI - Outward Direct Investment
- OSCE - Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
- SCO - Shanghai Cooperation Organization
- UN - United Nations
- UNCTAD - United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
- WITS - World Integrated Trade Solution
- WTO - World Trade Organization