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Energy security and Chinese influence in Kazakhstan

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Abstract

Energy security has been for decades one of the most important issues for the world economy. Since the 1970s, the supply of energy has meant a sure basis for the economic development of a country, it does not matter whether the country was an exporter or an importer. This problem is paramount for those countries that must sustain a huge economy like China, but it is likewise important for those countries that based their export sector -and their economies- on an energy resource. Oil is the energy resources of this dissertation -and to be more precise, crude oil- that represents the first good exported by Kazakhstan, the second country analyzed in this work. What I analyze are the relations in the oil sector between these two countries in the period 2014-2018. This period is crucial for the history of China because represents the first five years of the Belt and Road Initiative and the moment during the Kazakh economy was tested by the fall of the oil prices and the action of the Chinese oil firm in its own oil assets. My research question is: in a situation of economic asymmetry between two countries trading energy resource -one with a strong developed economy and one with a weak national economy based on the export of natural resource- will the importer country with the stronger economy able to increase its power over the exporter country? The answer to this question is negative, because despite the economic asymmetry between two countries, if the exporting country bases its economy on the natural resource traded, an importing country will meet resistance from the exporting country and will not be able to increase its power over it. To verify this hypothesis, I will apply the Asymmetry Theory theorized by Brantley Womack. This theory has been used to analyze the relations between China and Vietnam, and this application to the relations between China and Kazakhstan represents a novelty. To each of the key concepts -energy security, power, and multi-vector policy- is dedicated a deep analysis.

Introduction

In this dissertation, I will explain the relationship between China and Kazakhstan in the oil sector between 2014 and 2018. I will apply as theoretical framework the Asymmetry Theory of Brantley Womack. There are many reasons why I decided to write this dissertation. The most important, was to study the role that the region, and in particular Kazakhstan, has got in the international politics, what the interests of the main powers are in the region, and how the five states of the region react to these attentions. In the decision of the topic for my dissertation, the influence of the book “The Great Chessboard” by Zbigniew Brzezinski was important, because I meant this work to be an analysis of a superpower’s influence -China- in a bordering region. But this old school approach -now I realize to be at least two centuries old- was soon put away in the study of how Kazakhstan manages its export of crude oil. In the application of the theory of Womack and the collection of the data that I am going to use, I have come to realize that the role of the single Central Asian states in the international relations of the region is important, even paramount in some cases to understand how the superpowers deal with the region and the states.¹ As a matter of fact, one of the variables of my work is the “multi-vector policy”, a concept that many scholars have used since the independence of the Central Asian countries as conceptual paradigm to understand and explain the foreign policy of Kazakhstan.² My research question is: in a situation of economic asymmetry between two countries trading energy resource -one with a strong developed economy and one with a weak national economy based on the export of natural resource- will the importer country with the stronger economy able to increase its power over the exporter country? The hypothesis of my dissertation is that despite the economic asymmetry between two countries, an importing country will meet resistance from the exporting country and will not be able to increase its power over it. My case

¹ This opinion has turned into the mainstream approach to study the region in the last two decades, but I was always skeptical about this position

² M. Kassen, ‘Understanding foreign policy strategy of Kazakhstan: a case study of the landlocked and transcontinental country’, *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, Vol. 31, N. 3-4, pp. 314-343

study confirms this hypothesis: in the period between 2014 and 2018, the flow of crude oil between Kazakhstan and China reduced sensitively after a period in which the Chinese NOCs had invested millions of dollars in exploration projects and acquisition of shares of the most important Kazakh oil assets. The resistance from the Kazakh government to the investments of Chinese NOCs is represented by the fact that the Kazakh Government made approve some laws that reinforced its role in the local NOCs and that China has become one of the less important destinations for the export of Kazakh oil, overcome by European and other Asian destinations.

There are two main contributions to the academic debate I give with this dissertation. The first one is to apply the Asymmetry Theory to a context in which China is strongly involved, different from the one in which the theory has been thought. The second is that the publications about the relations between Kazakhstan and China in the energy sector reached a peak between the end of the 1990s and the beginning of the 2000s and then slowly reduced. In the academic debate, there is a lack of works dealing with the Sino-Kazakh relations in the oil sector in the period analyzed in my dissertation. In the last six years, the main works about China and Central Asia have been focused mainly on the development of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and the effects on the single Central Asian states³. The sources I have used are mainly secondary -especially for the parts about the historical background and the conceptualization of the analysis- but I have also used primary sources like data provided by the webpages of the Ministry of the National Economy of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the United Nations.

I have structured the dissertation in three chapters. All the chapters are also divided into sub-topics. The first chapter explains the background of my dissertation both from a historical and a theoretical point of view. In the first case, I will introduce the relations between the two countries from the independence of Kazakhstan until nowadays, mainly focusing on the relations in the oil

³ R. Satke and F. Galdini, 'Entre Oriente y Occidente: Kazajistan y la nueva Ruta de la Seda de China', Revisa CIDOB d'Afers Internacionals, N. 110, pp. 87-112

sector and the investment of China in some Kazakh oil companies. Those were part of the “going out” strategy, also explained in the chapter, to look for new sources of oil supply. To have a better understanding of the topic, I also consider how oil has become a strategic good for China starting from the economic situation of the country after the end of the Civil War in 1949. The following section of the chapter is dedicated to the theoretical background. The Asymmetry Theory belongs to the framework of the neo-Realist theories and it has been based on the relations between China and Vietnam. I will explain how it is applied to my cases and how it is related to other theoretical frameworks in International Relations academia.

In the second chapter the focus will be on the analysis of the three variables: energy security -the independent variable-; power and its exercises -dependent variable-; and multi-vector policy -intervening variable-. For all the variables, the approach in the analysis followed these steps: how it was born; how it has developed in the academic debates; what are the main features of the concept; and which ones are applicable to my case study. The variable that is analyzed the most is power: this concept, as you will see, has developed through the centuries and in many different fields: philosophy, sociology, political science, and international relations.

In the third chapter, I will analyze the data that I have gathered. The data are taken from the UN Comtrade Dataset. This dataset is created by the UN Department of Economics and Social Affairs every year with the data received provided by every country about its own import and export flows. That makes this kind of data a primary source because are given directly by the countries themselves. The data are divided by goods and services, and every good is categorized according to its typology and characteristics. The data are available online. The main issue is that there is not a standardized way to count the trade flow but there are two ways to count the values of the good traded: some countries count the value of the trade until their borders without considering the actual the final destination and others count both the final destination and the arrival at the border. I decided to keep the statistical gap in the different ways to calculate the trade flow of both China and Kazakhstan in

order to maintain the different points of view in the relationship of the countries in the oil sector. For the economic statistics about the composition of the Kazakh GDP by sector, I used reports issued by the Ministry of the National Economy of Kazakhstan for the years 2015, 2016, 2017, and 2018. All these reports are available online in English. The report for the year 2014 was only available in Russian and I decided not to use it because of my scarce knowledge of the Russian language and my lack of trust in the translation instruments provided by the Internet. Furthermore, the statistical data in Russian are composed differently from the English ones. I think that in this way I have applied in the best way possible the theoretical background because I respected one of the pillars of the theory of Womack: the different points of view of the countries involved in the relationship, that shape the relationship itself. This last chapter concludes with the explanation of why my hypothesis and the theory of Womack are proved and how.

My approach is a comparative qualitative approach with the use of quantitative databases. I give the quantitative variations of both crude oil flow and crude oil value a scale according to the percentage variations of these indicators for Kazakhstan, China, and their partners. In the analysis of the trade, I have not considered all their partners: the two countries trade crude oil with more than 40 countries on average every year, and with some of them the quantity and the economic value is so scarce that they do not influence the general trend of oil flow. So I will take just the most important importer and exporters, I will analyze to which continental framework they belong and the political implications of the flow with China and Kazakhstan.

Chapter 1

Historical Background

The relations between Kazakhstan and China are a new subject in the field of international relations and Asian politics. During the Soviet period, Kazakhstan was one of the 15 republics of the union and became independent in 1991 after the collapse of the USSR. Kazakhstan is located in the middle of the Eurasian macro-continent and between two superpowers that have a longer statehood tradition: the Russian Federation and China. Russian Federation is the successor of the USSR and because of that keeps a privileged relationship with Nur-Sultan: Russians are the second biggest ethnic group in the country -even if the percentage on the overall population has decreased over the years and it is still decreasing-⁴; Christians Eastern Orthodox are the second biggest religious group⁵ and Russian is the second language.

Central Asia became an energy hub in the Soviet period. Resources like gas, oil, and water then were part of the same country and they were managed by a centralized system. In Central Asia, the exploitation of oilfields started during the 1920s, while in the Caucasus the first explorations of oilfields started at the beginning of the second half of the XIX century.⁶ During the 1960s, the oilfields in Central Asia and the Caucasus belonged to a system that started from the two regions and through the other Soviet republics ended in the communist regimes of Eastern Europe.⁷ In this network, Kazakhstan became specialized in the production of oil and gas. After the collapse of the USSR, the new independent states' elites started thinking not regionally but nationally⁸ because the exploitation of natural resources was the fastest path to reach a stable economic development. The problem was

⁴ S. Cummings, Understanding Central Asia, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012), table 3.1, p. 55

⁵ Too, K. 'Religion in Kazakhstan', (2019), <https://www.worldatlas.com/articles/religious-beliefs-in-kazakhstan.html>, consulted on 03/22/2020

⁶ B. Janusz-Pawletta, The Legal Status of the Caspian Sea-Current Challenges and Prospect for Future Development, (Heidelberg: Springer, 2015)

⁷ A. Boute, Energy Security along the New Silk Road-energy law and geopolitics in Central Asia, (Cambridge, UK: University Printing House), pp. 23-24

⁸ Boute, *ibidem*, p. 29

that the local regimes had to rely on the old network of pipelines. Pipelines that at the beginning of the new century were obsolete and not well-functioning, also because they were projected and built to transport oil to the Soviet center and in the new international framework the only country that could enjoy this situation was Russia.⁹ Because of these factors, international oil companies (IOCs) started penetrating the oil and gas market in the region.

From the very first moment, the goal for the communist regime was to create a stable economy and many paths were taken to develop both the industry and agriculture. The former was the only sector that the regime was able to develop in the short term, but because of the communist ideology which the policies were based on, the economy showed the same pitfalls that USSR had during the 1920s.¹⁰ The situation changed after the death of Mao and a new program of reforms implemented by Deng Xiaoping in 1978. Since that year, China has always seen a positive annual GDP growth rate, that since 1990 has never been lower than 5%.¹¹ In this framework, we have to consider that the industry always had a primary role in the economy and that China could count on the internal production of coal as the primary source of energy. At the beginning of the new century, coal was still the most important source of energy for industry, but its demand was so high that in 2015 China accounted for half of the global demand for coal.¹² Oil has started sustaining the Chinese economic development since the mid-1980s, especially in the sector of transportation, and also because of this continuous demand during that decade that China became an importer state in 1993.¹³ It is clear that in that period the Chinese government became more interested in Central Asia. Oil made the two regions meet.

⁹ Boute, *ibidem*, p. 37

¹⁰ G. Sabbatucci, V. Vidotto, *Storia Contemporanea-Il Novecento*, (Bari: Editori Laterza, 2008), p. 301

¹¹ World Bank website,

<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG?end=2018&locations=CN&start=1961&view=chart>, consulted on 03/23/2020

¹² R. Dannreuther, *Energy Security*, (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2017), p. 111

¹³ G. Bridge, P. Le Billon, *Oil*, (Cambridge: Policy Press, 2017), p. 165

In the 1990s Central Asia countries entered the energy resources market and immediately it imposed as a major energy-producing region¹⁴, even if less important than the Middle East. That was an important change because the role of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) also diminished and National Oil Companies from China, India, and Europe had the chances to break the monopoly of OPEC and have a major role in new extractive projects. In this same period, China decided to reshape its energy governance by abolishing the Ministry of Energy and giving more freedom to its NOCs, which since then have enjoyed the rank of ministries along with the independence to pursue their profit goals.¹⁵ The three new Chinese NOCs that were the result of this reorganization were the China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC); the China Petroleum & Chemical Corporation Limited (Sinopec); and the China National Offshore Oil Corporation (CNOOC). The structure of the Chinese NOCs is peculiar: they are state-owned companies, but they enjoy a high level of autonomy in terms of investment strategy, that allows them to compete with International Oil Companies (IOCs) in the quest for resources¹⁶, that does not against the Government's "going-out" strategy, that is the strategy adopted by the Chinese Government in 1997 to secure oil and energy imports.¹⁷ This strategy can be defined as the diversified quest for oil in term of importing countries, investments made, and tools used to achieve the quota of oil missing in the annual consumption.¹⁸ According to some authors, this strategy is called "neomercantilism".¹⁹ This approach is an evolution of the mercantilist approach typical of the European states between the 16th and the 19th century, and in the energy sector can be defined as a 'strategic partnership between an importing state and an exporting state to lock in privilege access to oil via infrastructure and development deals and "equity oil" contracts which give the investing partner [...] the right to take

¹⁴Dannreuther, *ibidem*, p. 63

¹⁵ T. S. Eder, China-Russia Relations in Central Asia-Energy Policy, Beijing's New Assertiveness and 21st Century Geopolitics, (Wiesbaden: Springer, 2014), p. 37

¹⁶ Bridge and Le Billon, *ibidem*, p. 29

¹⁷ Eder, *ibidem*, p. 38

¹⁸ For more details see V. Vivoda, J. Manicom, 'Oil Import Diversification in Northeast Asia: A Comparison Between China and Japan', Journal of East Asian Studies, Vol. 11, No. 2 (2011), pp. 223-254; and W. Chen, 'China's Oil Strategy: "Going Out" to Iran', Asian Politics & Policy, Vol. 2, No 1 (2010), pp. 39-54

¹⁹ Dannreuther, *ibidem*, p. 69

or market oil'.²⁰ Other authors have defined the Chinese approach as “statist multilateralism”, in which the aim of a state is to create capital by the reallocation of the surplus of capital coming from its borders.²¹ The investments of China in Kazakhstan were made easy by the aim of avoiding foreign domination and the strong influence.²²

The Chinese activities in the Kazakh oil sector

The “loans-for-oil” deals that promise mainly industrial machinery in exchange for oil and gas are the most used tools by the Chinese NOCs in the “going-out” strategy.²³ In some cases, the effects of these deals are political because China can supply arms or give international support to the exporting countries.²⁴ The main form of these deals is the bilateral agreement between China and the exporter country with more than 20 years of duration. These kinds of agreements are not commercially advantageous for a country like China because the two sides of the agreement have the same contractual level and require too much commitment.²⁵ But they are the only way to assure equity oil to China²⁶ and the alternative would be to rely on the international market, but it has too many variables that threaten the supply of oil.²⁷ As you will see in the next chapters, China has applied this pattern in all the continents.

In Kazakhstan, the most visible effects deriving from the intervention of China on the local oil market are the building of a pipeline connecting the oil fields in the Northern Caspian to the

²⁰ Bridge and Le Billon, *ibidem*, p. 237

²¹ M. P. Amineh, M. van Driel, ‘China’s statist energy relations with Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan’, *African and Asian Studies*, Vol. 18 (2018), pp. 63-89

²² Amineh and van Driel, *ibidem*, p. 74. For more details about the scandals in Kazakhstan involving Chinese NOCs see: A. Cooley, *Great Games, Local Rulers*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 138-142 and A. Cooley, J. Heathershaw, *Dictators without borders-Power and money in Central Asia*, (New Heaven: Yale University Press, 2018), pp. 181-185

²³ Bridge and Le Billon, *ibidem*, p. 96

²⁴ Bridge and Le Billon, *ibidem*, p. 165

²⁵ Bridge and Le Billon, *ibidem*, p. 231

²⁶ Equity oil is a contractual regime that allows the oil companies operating in a country to sell abroad a limited part of the local oil production. For more detailed about equity oil direct application see H. Zhao, ‘China’s Oil Venture in Africa’, *East Asia*, Vol. 24, N. 4 (2007), pp. 399-415

²⁷ B. Shaffer, *Energy Politics*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), p. 87

Chinese border and the Chinese NOCs participation in extractive projects. In 1997 CNPC and KazMunayGas, a Kazakh state-owned company, announced the construction of the “Kazakhstan-China Oil Pipeline”, project to be developed in three stages and that was completed in 2009, when it became operational.²⁸ The pipeline is 2,228 km long and connects Atyrau, the terminal of the oil fields in the Northern Caspian Sea, to the city of Alashankou, in the Xinjiang autonomous region. According to many experts, this pipeline belongs to a Chinese-controlled energy network which includes the gas pipeline from Turkmenistan, to break down the Russian control of the energy infrastructure in the region.²⁹ The reason is very simple: with these new pipelines, the export of Central Asian energy resources is re-directed away from Moscow to Beijing.³⁰ The importance of this pipeline for the trade of the two countries was so important that after one year the volume of oil exchange between the two countries increased from 25,592 barrels per day (bb/d) to 200,000 bb/d.³¹ But the construction of this pipeline was not the only way China penetrated the Kazakh oil sector: Chinese oil companies became active in extractive projects first in the biggest oilfields and then in the smallest ones and started purchasing shares of Kazakh oil companies. In 2005 when CNPC acquired the control of PetroKazakhstan, one of the biggest groups of oil companies in the country³², for 4,18 billion \$. Other following acquisitions were made in 2009 when CNPC acquired in a joint deal with KazMunayGas the oil producer “MangustauMunaiGaz” for 1,7 billion \$ each one³³; totally, by June 2010, Chinese companies held between 50% and 100% stake in 15 Kazakh energy companies.³⁴ After this expansion, the Kazakh Ministry of Energy made an explicit request to let the local company be among the shareholders.³⁵ In those years Kazakhstan became for China the second foreign market for investment in the oil sector after Sudan with an important difference: to transport from Sudan requires

²⁸ Eder, *ibidem*, p. 38

²⁹ *The Economist*, 27 July 2019, p. 15, <https://www.economist.com/asia/2013/09/14/rising-china-sinking-russia>, consulted on 03/24/2020

³⁰ A. Cooley, J. Heathershaw, *Dictators without borders-Power and money in Central Asia*, (New Heaven: Yale University Press, 2018), p. 181

³¹ A. Cooley, ‘*Great Games, Local Rulers*’, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 92

³² Cooley, *ibidem*, p. 91

³³ Amineh and van Driel, *ibidem*, p. 76

³⁴ Eder, *ibidem*, p. 53

³⁵ Amineh and van Driel, *ibidem*, p. 75

higher costs and it is riskier for the transit through the Gulf of Aden, a zone infested by pirates, and the Strait of Malacca, while the import from Kazakhstan was safer and quicker.

Taking back the control

But the expansion of the Chinese companies was not seen positively by the Kazakh government that aimed at keeping the control of some strategic assets. The pressure made the Ministry of the Energy was only one of the measures taken not to lose the national oil production, that was becoming one of the most important sources of revenues for Kazakh economy: from 1992 to 2013 the production grew from 425,000 to 1,3 billion bbl./d, making the oil sector -and in particular the oil export- the most important economic pillars. As a consequence, the growth of the GDP started being positive from the second half of the 1990s, touching a +13.5% in 2001.³⁶ It was clear that the penetration by the Chinese oil companies in this strategic sector that was aiming at giving the Chinese market the preference as destination. The point is that such a penetration was a big problem for the Kazakh government, which saw its main economic sector threatened by a foreign intervention. So, in 2004 and 2005 the Law on Petroleum, the Subsoil and Subsoil Use Law, and the Law on Production Sharing Agreement were approved.³⁷ These laws allowed the government to maintain control over the KazMunayGas company and the Kashagan oil project.³⁸ KazMunayGas is the company that has enjoyed the most the political support from the government and the financial support from the National Bank and the Samruk-Kazyna Sovereign Wealth Fund. That made possible to gain control over the Kashagan oil project in the Northern Caspian, of which KazMunayGas holds 16.81%.³⁹

³⁶ Amineh and van Driel, *ibidem*, p. 75; World Bank website, <https://data.worldbank.org>, consulted on 08/13/2020

³⁷ S. Orazgaliyev, 'State intervention in Kazakhstan's energy sector: Nationalization or participation?', Journal of Eurasia, Vol. 9, (2018), p. 146

³⁸ Orazgaliyev, *ibidem*, pp 147-148.

³⁹ Orazgaliyev, *ibidem*, p. 148

The Kashagan oilfield is the largest oilfield in Kazakhstan and its terminal for the export to China is Atyrau. It was discovered in 2000 after the exploration of a consortium composed of foreign International Oil Companies (IOCs) like Eni, BG, ExxonMobil, and Shell.⁴⁰ When it was discovered, the provisions of Kashagan production was 1.2 million bb/d, and it was considered the biggest oilfield discovered in the last 30 years.⁴¹ The beginning of the production was postponed in 2013 due to technical problems and it started in 2016.⁴² Since then, it has been the main production asset of Kazakhstan along with two other oilfields: Tengiz and Karachaganak. The former is on the North-East shores of Caspian while the latter in the West Kazakhstan Region, at the border with Russia. The control of these oilfields and the control of the state companies are the pillars of the Kazakhstan oil sector. The strengthening of these two pillars is moved by the attempt to counterbalance the bargaining power of the Chinese NOCs in the national energy sector by improving the Kazakh relative power.⁴³

Theoretical framework

Analysts recognized that there are three main approaches in studying the concept of energy security and the energy relations between states: Realist approach, Liberal approach, and Marxist approach.⁴⁴ Some authors add a fourth: the constructivist approach.⁴⁵ The Realist approach is the

⁴⁰ S. Elliott, 'The history of the Kashagan oil field', (2013), https://advance.lexis.com/document/?pdmfid=151936200&crd=f7acb57c-2f69-48e9-9dc6-a25a7d3f53e4&pddocfullpath=%2Fshared%2Fdocument%2Fnews%2Furn%3AcontentItem%3A59HY-SVM1-JBRV-H1G3-0000-00&pdcontentcomponentid=8046&pdteaserkey=sr2&pdtab=allpods&pdworkfolderlocatorid=NOT_SAVED_IN_WORKFOLDER&ecom=pfq9k&earg=sr2&prid=4f7d9286-977d-4a3b-af2b-ba424538a418, consulted on 03/26/2020

⁴¹ *The Economist*, 11 October 2014, <https://www.economist.com/business/2014/10/11/cash-all-gone>, consulted on 03/26/2020

⁴² *The Economist*, *ibidem*, <https://www.economist.com/business/2014/10/11/cash-all-gone>, consulted on 03/26/2020

⁴³ Bridge and Le Billon, *ibidem*, p. 24; Orazgaliyev, *ibidem*, p. 146

⁴⁴ Dannreuther, *ibidem*, pp. 23-29

⁴⁵ T. van de Graaf, B.K. Sovacool, A. Ghosh, F. Kern, M.T. Klare, 'States, Markets, and Institutions: Integrating International Political Economy and Global Energy Politics' in T. van de Graaf, B. K. Sovacool, A. Ghosh, F. Kern, M.T.

oldest and considers natural resources, and among them energy, an instrument to strengthen the power position of a state in the international arena.⁴⁶ Now the problem is that energy resources are not well distributed among states, so the race for the control becomes a geopolitical confrontation among superpowers to control the regions where energy resources are located.⁴⁷ The Realist approach is also called “mercantilist” approach, and according to Klare, it justifies the “New Great Game” discourse about the Chinese involvement in Central Asia and in the Caspian Sea.⁴⁸

According to the Liberal approach, energy is just one of the many tools that states have to develop the world economy. In Liberal theories, politics goes along with the economy, and the two are interconnected. If according to the Realist theories countries try to get all the resources for themselves to have more power and survive, for Liberal theorists energy is equally allocated among states through the market economy in which, private firms are free to act without the state intervention. Along with the states, the main actors are private firms, which contribute to share and distribute energy resources in the market.⁴⁹

The third approach is the Marxist approach, in which theorists sustain that economy is the pillar of the society and politics is just a consequence of the economic structure.⁵⁰ The same scheme as the exploitation of the working class by the class owning the means of production -the capitalist class- is represented at the international level, with the richest countries, based on the capitalist economic model, exploiting poor resources-rich countries and gaining through the extraction and the selling of natural resources. Nowadays, this patten is represented in the relationships between

Klare (ed), *The Palgrave Handbook of the International Political Economy of Energy* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), p. 13

⁴⁶ T. van de Graaf, B.K. Sovacool, A. Ghosh, F. Kern, M.T. Klare, in van de Graaf, Sovacool, Ghosh, and Klare, (ed) *ibidem*, p. 13

⁴⁷ Dannreuther, *ibidem*, p. 23

⁴⁸ Dannreuther, *ibidem*, p. 24

⁴⁹ T. van de Graaf, B.K. Sovacool, A. Ghosh, F. Kern, M.T. Klare, in van de Graaf, Sovacool, Ghosh, and Klare, (ed), *ibidem*, p. 13

⁵⁰ T. van de Graaf, B.K. Sovacool, A. Ghosh, F. Kern, M.T. Klare, in van de Graaf, Sovacool, Ghosh, and Klare, (ed), *ibidem*, p. 14

developed countries and their former colonies, especially in Africa -or in my case in Asia- because the latter do not have the skills and the means to develop the energy sector by themselves.

The last framework, the Constructivism framework, starts from the assumption that the role of energy in each society depends on its inherent values. So resources-rich countries do not have the same hunger for resources as resources-poor countries. The process through which a resource-poor country makes the quest of energy a priority is called “securitization”.⁵¹ “Securitization” is the “identification of an existential threat to a valued referent object and the call for exceptional measures”.⁵² For Constructivist theorists, the values, the norms, and the beliefs of a society are the basis of the ‘securitization’ process that brings to the definition of energy security, that it is recognized as a threat to the living of the society.

For this dissertation, the background is the Asymmetry Theory coined by Brantly Womack. This theory has been thought by the author to explain the relationships between China and Vietnam, but I think that it is applicable also to my case because there are political and historic parallelisms between the Southern-eastern Asian country and the Central Asian republic. First of all, portions of the modern territories of Kazakhstan and Vietnam were part of the former Chinese Empire, and in these portions are located in both cases the most important cities: Almaty and Hanoi. The northern part of Vietnam became part of the Chinese Empire during the Han dynasty and remained part of the Chinese territory until the 10th century.⁵³ In Kazakhstan, the region that belonged to China was the Eastern part (Almaty region and part of the Eastern Kazakhstan region).⁵⁴ During the 1990s, some Chinese scholars started from the assumption that China was still territorially an empire to put the Eastern part of Kazakhstan and the Ferghana Valley -today divided among Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan,

⁵¹ T. van de Graaf, B.K. Sovacool, A. Ghosh, F. Kern, M.T. Klare, in van de Graaf, Sovacool, Ghosh, and Klare, (ed), *ibidem*, table 1.1, p. 16

⁵² Buzan B., Wæver O., ‘Macrosecuritisation and Security Constellations: Reconsidering Scale in Securitisation Theory’, *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 35, No. 2 (2009), pp. 253-276

⁵³ *Enciclopedia*, (Milano: Rizzoli Larousse, 2003) Vol. 22, p. 385

⁵⁴ ‘Finché America non ci separi’, *Limes-Rivista Italiana di Geopolitica*, Vol. 11/2019, map n.2, p.14

and Tajikistan- inside the historical boundaries of the Chinese Empire.⁵⁵ If we also compare some other data, we see other similarities: both Kazakhstan and Vietnam are smaller than China in terms of the population⁵⁶, territorial extension⁵⁷, economic volume⁵⁸ and military capabilities. From a theoretical point of view, the author explains that the study of the relations between China and Vietnam gave him the chance to fill a gap typical of many other theories: the idea that smaller side in International Relations cannot influence the behavior of the great powers, those decisions creates effects in the global arena.⁵⁹ If the other theories are focused on the superpower's point of view, Womack focuses on the weaker countries' point of view. Applied to energy security, this means that in the flow of energy resources between two countries with asymmetric capabilities, the stronger side cannot decide the mechanism of the relationship.

These facts are important for the theory I will use because it considers the relationships between two countries based on the asymmetries in all these aspects. The former is country A which is bigger in terms of political and social capabilities, and in my case will be China. The smaller country is Kazakhstan, country B. The theory of asymmetry is so about how the disparity of capacities and power creates different feelings of perception and relative powers.⁶⁰

Asymmetry is defined as a situation of disparity stable and visible between the capabilities of two states, even though it is not overwhelming.⁶¹ In the case of Kazakhstan and China, the disparities

⁵⁵ A. Umraov and D. Pashkun, quoted in R. Muzalevsky, 'China's Rise and Reconfiguration of Central Asia's Geopolitics: A case for U.S. "Pivot" to Eurasia', Current Politics and Economics of Northern and Western Asia, Vol. 24, No. 2/3 (2015), pp. 369-444

⁵⁶ In 2019 the Chinese population was 1,433,784,000 people, the Kazakh population was 18,551,000 people, and the Vietnamese population was 96,462,000 people, UN Data, <http://data.un.org/en/index.html>, consulted on 04/15/2020

⁵⁷ Territorial extension: China 9,600,000 km²; Kazakhstan 2,724,902 km²; Vietnam 330,967 km². The data refer to 2017. UN Data, *ibidem*

⁵⁸ According to the World Bank website the Kazakhstan GDP for 2018 was 179.34 billion US\$; for Vietnam was 245.214 billion US\$; for China was 13.608 trillion US\$. World Bank website, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CD?locations=KZ>, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CD?locations=VN>, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CD?locations=CN>, consulted on 03/31/2020

⁵⁹ B. Womack, Asymmetry and International Relationships, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016), p. 1

⁶⁰ B. Womack, 'Asymmetry theory and China's concept of multipolarity', Journal of Contemporary China, Vol. 13, No. 39 (2004), p. 359

⁶¹ Womack, Asymmetry and International Relationships, p. 7

listed above are impossible to be overcome by Nur-Sultan because come from history and as we saw in the first paragraph the gap was already wide at the moment of independence of Kazakhstan. The relationship between the two countries is based on the roles that define the relationship itself. Country A's role is different from country B's role because of their capabilities and goals. Country A and country B then have different roles that they must respect each other. If they do so, the relationship will work. So country A must recognize country B's autonomy while country B must recognize the country A's authority: in this case authority does not mean that country A has territorial claims over the country, but rather it is a recognition that the superiority of capabilities make it different from B in goals and means.⁶²The relationship between them is bilateral and made up of two sub-relations, that follows this scheme $A \rightarrow B + A \leftarrow B = A \leftrightarrow B$.⁶³ The main point of this relationship is that the unilateral interests and identities of the two countries should not disturb the interactions among them.⁶⁴ If taken from this perspective, the relationship must be managed in order to maintain a balance of the sides' bargain power.⁶⁵ The case study follows this pattern. It may be argued that there are some aspects actually reverse the positions of the two countries by giving China the role of country B and Kazakhstan the role of country A for the presence of big oilfields and the Chinese need for oil for the economy. But I do not think this is the case. China is still to be considered country A for the economic capabilities that allow the development of energy infrastructures which Kazakhstan misses to exploit its energy sector. As we see, the relationship $A \leftrightarrow B$ fully fits my case study.

This theory is classifiable among the neo-Realist theories because the distribution of capabilities essentially means which country has more power. This theory represents one of the last evolutions inside the neo-Realist framework even if some details make it differ from the usual pattern. The author himself explains in which parts his theory evolves from some crucial concepts analyzed by the Realist tradition. The first concept to be differentiated is the concept of anarchy and the

⁶² Womack, 'Asymmetry theory and China's concept of multipolarity', p. 360

⁶³ Womack, Asymmetry and International Relationship, p. 33 and p. 45.

⁶⁴ Womack, 'China and Southeast Asia: Asymmetry, Leadership and Normalcy', p. 539

⁶⁵ Womack, Asymmetry and International Relationships, pp. 17-18

competition among nations, that, according to many Realist authors, stand at the basis of the International Relations.⁶⁶ According to Womack, his theory does not deny the existence of the competition among nations, but, as the two corollaries of the theory explain, it is about the management of this competition and anarchy. The first corollary of the theory says that the smaller side (country B) “cannot put the larger side at mortal risk” while the second says that the larger side (country A) “cannot eliminate the possibility of resistance by the smaller side”.⁶⁷ In this way the only option the countries have, if they want to maintain their interests, is to try to bargain, in order to have a win-win situation within a situation of anarchy.⁶⁸

Another concept typical of the realism framework that it is partially adopted is the concept of power. This concept that will be analyzed in the next sections, has been discussed for a long time. Womack sustains that Realist theorists generally use an incorrect idea of power because it gives to many margins to the most powerful side to shape the relationship.⁶⁹ What he wants to emphasize is that the Asymmetry Theory goes beyond this limitation by taking into account how internal capabilities -military or economic- of the weaker country can shape the relationship between country A and country B.⁷⁰ When Womack makes clear that there are some aspects different from the pure power that influence the relationship, this idea is taken by some standpoints of the constructivism approach and the British School.⁷¹ As a matter of fact, the differences in capabilities and shape the perspective and then the social interactions that are at the base of the relationship between two countries; because of this Womack also defines Asymmetry Theory “Dialectical Realism”.⁷²

⁶⁶ Here the concept of anarchy is taken by Hobbes, who defines it “the absence of an absolute ruler”, Womack, Asymmetry and International Relationship, footnote n. 21, p. 15

⁶⁷ Womack, Asymmetry and International Relationships, p. 16

⁶⁸ Womack, Asymmetry and International Relationships, p. 19

⁶⁹ Womack, Asymmetry and International Relationships, p. 29

⁷⁰ Womack, Asymmetry and International Relationships, p. 29

⁷¹ Womack, Asymmetry and International Relationships, p. 27

⁷² Womack, Asymmetry and International Relationships, p. 28

Literature review

The literature about energy security has become to rise in political sciences and international relations after the oil crisis in the 1970s. Nowadays the literature about energy resources is divided into the typology of resources (oil, natural gas, coal); the geopolitics of energy resources; and the conceptualization of energy security. “Energy Security” by Roland Dannreuther and ‘The Palgrave Handbook of the International Political Economy of Energy’ edited by van de Graaf, Sovacool, Ghosh, Kern, and Klare belong to the last category. The first book gives an idea of energy security taking into account different dimensional approaches,⁷³ while the latter puts in relation energy security and the international frameworks and actors like civil society, national and private companies, and states⁷⁴ also from a historical perspective.

The literature about the geopolitical implications touches every region in the world, but obviously, Asia has a privileged spot in this field for the presence of the most important producers in the world -in the Middle East- and for the growing economic weight that the continent will have in the next decades. About Central Asia, the literature has focused on the study of water as energy resources in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan and on the study of gas and oil in Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan. The mechanisms regulating the politics and the economy of energy in Central Asia are analyzed by Anatole Boute in “Energy Security and the New Silk Road-energy law and Geopolitics in Central Asia” published in 2019. The book focuses on the energy legislation of the five republics and the reasons that made them fail.⁷⁵ In the analysis, the factors taken into account are the influence of foreign companies, the inherent economic conditions, and political decisions taken by the local governments.⁷⁶

⁷³ Dannreuther, *ibidem*

⁷⁴ T. van de Graaf, B.K. Sovacool, A. Ghosh, F. Kern, M.T. Klare, in van de Graaf, Sovacool, Ghosh, and Klare, (ed) *ibidem*, p. 15

⁷⁵ Boute, *ibidem*, p. 2

⁷⁶ Boute, *ibidem*, p. 5

The foreign influence in the Central Asian energy sector is well explained in the book ‘China-Russia Relations in Central Asia-Energy Policy, Beijing’s New Assertiveness and 21st Century Politics’. The aim of the book is very simple: the author wants to explain the shift of power in Central Asia from Russia to China, and the energy security of the two countries -that among them maintain good relations in terms of energy trade- is used as a case study.⁷⁷ The geopolitical relevance of the region -that can be considered by both the superpowers their geographical backyard- has been analyzed also by the Italian geopolitical magazine *Limes*. In the number dedicated to the relation between China and Russia, Kazakhstan is pictured as the pivot of the entire region for future cooperation and collaboration between Beijing and Moscow.⁷⁸ According to the authors of this article, the geopolitical future of the region -and Kazakhstan- will depend on the role that political groups and ethnic clans will have after the Nazarbayev era, and the following collocation of the country in the global arena, that may award one superpower in respect of the others.⁷⁹ The emphasis on the clan structure of Kazakhstan according to the consequences in international politics is an element of novelty in the analysis of the region. A more classical explanation of Kazakh foreign policy and position in international politics is given by Kassen, who explains Kazakh foreign policy as a consequence of its status of landlocked country.⁸⁰ According to the author, both the status of landlocked and transcontinental country shape together Kazakh foreign policy. Usually, the literature focuses more on the second aspect.⁸¹ Kassen sustains that its status of landlocked creates many challenges to Kazakhstan, challenges that the country compensates by being also a transcontinental state.⁸² The empirical output in terms of political decisions is the multi-vector.⁸³

⁷⁷ Eder, *ibidem*, pp. 13-14

⁷⁸ E. Novario and F. Vielmini, ‘Kazakistan-Il Perno dell’Asia Centrale’, *Limes*, Vol. 11/2019, p. 189

⁷⁹ Novario and Vilemini, *ibidem*, p. 199

⁸⁰ M. Kassen, *ibidem*, p. 315

⁸¹ Kassen, *ibidem*, p. 318

⁸² Kassen, *ibidem*, p. 323

⁸³ Kassen, *ibidem*, p. 323

The literature about China's involvement in Central Asia and energy implications have already been studied for almost 30 years, especially after that China became a net exporter. In the essay "Outcomes and strategies in the 'New Great Game': China and the Caspian states emerge as winners" by Smith and Kuznir and it is about how China has used its energy search as a political tool against other important superpowers.⁸⁴ The authors compare the approaches of Russia, the European Union (EU), the United States, and China, and explain that the approach of Beijing has been the best to meet the expectation of the Central Asian countries that are also littoral countries in the Caspian Basin: Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan.⁸⁵ The geopolitical implications of the Chinese involvement in Central Asia and specifically in the Kazakh oil sector were discussed by Skalamera, who has explained that the penetration in the Nur-Sultan's oil sector is just a part of the strategy of the BRI and that the penetration has not been stopped by Russia for three main reasons: Moscow could not compete with the economic strength of Beijing; despite the investment, Russia remained the main partner for the Kazakh energy sector; last but not least, the chance that Russia and China would fight for the control of the energy sector not only in Kazakhstan but in Central Asia are low, since the focus of the Russian energy interests is moving toward the Arctic Sea.⁸⁶ The essay 'The overseas acquisitions and equity oil shares of Chinese national oil companies: A threat to the West but a boost to China's energy security?' by ZhongXiang Zhang goes against the thesis of the essay written by Smith and Kuznir because assumes that China should rely more on the international oil market in order to assure for itself a higher level of energy security.⁸⁷ So, the best way is not to politicize the investments abroad made by the Chinese NOCs. But at the same time, even the West should neither analyze nor consider the action of Chinese NOCs from a political point of view, because this may undermine the interaction between NOCs and IOCs in the oil market, making China

⁸⁴ K. Smith, J. Kuznir, 'Outcomes and strategies in the 'New Great Game': China and the Caspian states emerge as winners', *Journal of Eurasian Studies*, No. 6 (2015), pp. 91-106

⁸⁵ Smith and Kuznir, *ibidem*, pp. 101-106

⁸⁶ M, Skalamera, 'The Silk Road between a Rock and a Hard Place: Russian and Chinese Competition for Central Asia's Energy', *Insight Turkey*, Vol. 20, M. 4 (Fall 2020), pp. 51-55

⁸⁷ Z. Zhang, 'The overseas acquisitions and equity oil shares of Chinese national oil companies: A threat to the West but a boost to China's energy security?', *Energy Policy*, Vol. 48 (2012), pp. 700-701

less keen in trusting in that.⁸⁸ In the paper “China’s energy security: perception and realities”, the author gives a more comprehensive approach to the problem and starts to analyze it from a historical perspective: the first years of the communist regime -that we saw being the years in which China needed to take the first steps toward an industrial economy- shaped the current perception of the energy needs in China.⁸⁹ This essay goes against the position expressed by Zhang in the previous paragraph: according to Leung, China does not have to rely on the international market and the stabilization of the prices, that is the ultimate market’s goal, because this undermines the current idea of energy security in China, that is the evolution of the one coming from the 1950s and the 1960s.⁹⁰ The proactive role of the Chinese public institutions in the investments in Kazakhstan was explained by Orazgaliyev, who explained how the roles of Kazakh and Chinese governments have changed in the last two decades in the development of the oil sector. The author’s position is that with the increasing of the competition for the Kazakh resources, the bargaining role of the Kazakh government has increased over the Chinese government, giving Nur-Sultan the margins to gain the most in this relationship.⁹¹

The changes in Chinese foreign policy were well summarized by Ferdinand, who explains how the change of leadership in the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) corresponded to a new paradigm of China in international relations. Hu Jintao, who was succeeded by Xi Jinping in 2013 as secretary general of CCP, had a different approach in foreign policy, still influenced by the ages in which China was a poor country and third-division power. The evolution of Chinese foreign policy described by Ferdinand starts from Deng Xiaoping’s doctrine to the realization of the “China dream” during the leadership of Xi Jinping, covering more than 50 years. For Deng, the doctrine was to keep a position

⁸⁸ Z. Zhang, *ibidem*, p. 700

⁸⁹G. C. K. Leung, ‘China’s energy security: Perception and reality’, *Energy Policy*, Vol. 39 (2011), p. 1332

⁹⁰ Leung, *ibidem*, pp. 1332-1333

⁹¹ Orazgaliyev S., ‘The role of home governments in entry bargaining of multinationals: China's investment in Central Asia's natural resource sector’, *Thunderbird International Business*, Vol. 62, (2020), pp. 249-262

of low profile and not to have imperial implications or superpower aspirations.⁹² For Hu, the main goal was to have a situation of harmony, both internally and externally, because he has a risk-averse approach: this approach was still preventing China from having a positive role in international politics.⁹³ After Xi became secretary general, the foreign policy approach was that of the “China dream” which the BRI belongs to, even if this project represents a negation of Deng’s idea about imperial aspirations.⁹⁴

The last book I base my work on is “Oil” by Gavin Bridge and Philippe Le Billon. This book gives a complete description of how “politics of oil” is hidden in every part of our life and how it importantly shapes the economic, social, and political decisions of all the countries, from the producers to the consumers. It analyzes the entire chain of production from the extraction to the market phase. Among the social consequences discussed in the book, a deep analysis is dedicated to the “Dutch Disease”, the exploitation of the workers in the extractive countries, and the economic development through oil. For my work, the most useful parts were about the conceptualization and the development of local economies through oil.

Methodology

In my dissertation, the analytical part is based on the comparison between the flow of crude oil in Kazakhstan and China from 2014 until 2018. More specifically, I will compare the export of Kazakhstan to its major destinations and the import of China from the major suppliers. I will compare what was the percentage⁹⁵ of oil exported to China from Kazakhstan and what was the share of this

⁹² P. Ferdinand, ‘Westward ho-the China dream and ‘one belt one road’: Chinese foreign policy under Xi Jinping, *International Affairs*, Vol. 92, N.4 (2016), p. 941

⁹³ Ferdinand, *ibidem*, p. 941

⁹⁴ Ferdinand, *ibidem*, p. 949

⁹⁵ The percentage are rounded off by two digits after the comma in order to make the understanding of the analysis easier.

export in the total revenues coming from the export sector for Nur-Sultan. In my work, China is to mean as the Chinese mainland. In all the statistical elaboration and data, the Special Autonomous Regions (SARs) of Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan are not considered. The dataset I used for this dissertation makes a difference between China, Hong Kong SAR, and Macao SAR because the three entities have economic systems based on different sectors. For China, crude oil represents the second most imported goods after electronic integrated circuits, and the import has grown in the last three years.⁹⁶ If we check the trade information about Hong Kong and Macao, we see that oil represent respectively the 10th and the 11th most imported good.⁹⁷ The two SARs enjoy the arrival from the sea routes in terms of oil import because they are two important harbors, and their imported quantity is so small that they cannot generate any significant change in the flows I will analyze. Natural resources are the main component of the export sector in Kazakhstan, and the country is a net exporter of goods rather than an exporter of services.⁹⁸ Actually, the export sector is the part that keeps positive the balance trade, and it has been so all over the five years I will analyze.⁹⁹

The data are taken by the UN Comtrade Database, prepared by the United Nations Statistics Office. The data were obtained by the research suggested on the UN Comtrade webpage through the research based on years, kind of flow (either export or import), classification of the type of product (good or service), code of the good, and frequency of the trade (either monthly or annual).¹⁰⁰ I have taken the 12 most important partners of both China and Kazakhstan in order to have a more comprehensive understanding of the flows of the countries. In my research, I also look for data from

⁹⁶ United Nations-Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2018 International Trade Statistics Yearbook-Vol. I, Trade by Country, (New York: United Nations, 2019), p. 103

⁹⁷ United Nations-Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2018 International Trade Statistics Yearbook-Vol. I, Trade by Country, p. 105 and p. 107

⁹⁸ United Nations-Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2018 International Trade Statistics Yearbook-Vol. I, Trade by Country, pp. 102-103

⁹⁹ United Nations-Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2014 International Trade Statistics Yearbook-Vol. I, Trade by Country, (New York: United Nations, 2015), p. 212; United Nations-Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2015 International Trade Statistics Yearbook-Vol. I, Trade by Country, (New York: United Nations, 2016), p. 218; United Nations-Department of Economics and Social Affairs, 2016 International Trade Statistics Yearbook-Vol. I, Trade by Country, (New York: United Nations, 2017), p. 220; United Nations-Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2017 International Trade Statistics Yearbook-Vol. I, Trade by Country, (New York: United Nations, 2019), p. 155

¹⁰⁰ UN Comtrade Database, <https://comtrade.un.org/data>, consulted on 04/12/2020

other sources like the International Energy Agency (IEA) and the United States Energy Information Agency (EIA), but at the end, I decided to opt for the data from the UN because they could give me more details about the flow of goods. In the beginning, The Kazakh Ministry of Energy and Ministry of Industry were my first choices as data sources for my thesis because they were original sources about the country I am focusing on. Unfortunately, these webpages are impossible to access from Italy, because they result in not existing or with denied access.

The good considered in my analysis is the crude oil, which code according to the Harmonized System (HS) used in the UN classification of goods is 270900.¹⁰¹ The reason why I chose it is very simple: China prefers to import crude oil because it has a large number of refineries on its territory, despite should be more convenient to let the crude be refined in Kazakhstan, for example in Shymkent, and then take it to China.¹⁰² The quantity of oil expressed by the UN dataset is in kilograms (kgs). I decided to keep this measure to have more detailed results. Conventionally, the unit of measure of the trade flow of oil is the barrel per day (bb/d). As a matter of fact, in the first part of this chapter, the data taken by the other sources are expressed in this way, and so do the EIA and the IEA. But the issue with this measure is that this dataset is based on the data provided by the single state members, and not all the UN members use this convention. The fact that the providers of the data are the states themselves and the UN is just the elaborator creates some other problems.

In my research for the data, the first thing that captured my attention was the difference between the exports to China declared by Kazakhstan and the Chinese imports from Kazakhstan. That is called 'bilateral asymmetry' and it is a common problem in the trade data, even if not common in the trade registration flow of energy sources. According to the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the UN there three different causes for the bilateral asymmetries: (I) the use of different

¹⁰¹ For more details about the HS look at the webpage <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/tradekb/Knowledgebase/50018/Harmonized-Commodity-Description-and-Coding-Systems-HS>

¹⁰² Amineh and van Driel, *ibidem*, p. 77

criteria in calculating import and export; (II) the use of CIF-type values in import statistics and FOB-type values in export statistics; (III) the application of different systems in data compilation.¹⁰³ The flows recorded with the CIF-type values consider the values of the good and the services used to bring goods from the starting point in the exporting country until the final destination in the importing country.¹⁰⁴ The FOB-type values consider just a part of the CIF-type values: the section from the starting point to the border of the exporting country.¹⁰⁵ In a report published by the same office of the UN, this problem is deeply analyzed, and one of the suggestions given to repair this problem is the calculation of the actual destination of the trade flow through the re-export option.¹⁰⁶

In the database, I took my data from it is possible to select this option, but again the details about this flow miss, just in the same way they were not available for the second partner countries. Another cause of this asymmetry is the timing of the measurement. Exporting and importing countries measure the trade flow differently also according to the time of delivering or sending.¹⁰⁷ This is especially relevant for the data about China: as we saw in the first paragraph of this chapter, and as we will see from my analysis, China heavily relies on the import of oil coming from the Middle East and passing through the Strait of Malacca, so the counting of the actual quantity of oil coming from abroad is influenced by the distance of the exporting country. I will leave the data in the way I found them on the UN website. That because I think that to leave the data as they are considered by the two countries can improve the sensibility of my analysis: I will analyses if the relationship has changed in term of the relative power of one side in respect to the other through the oil flow, and in the detail, I will check if China has increased its relative power against Kazakhstan. In this case, power is the ability of country A to use a natural resource -in my case study an energy resource- belonging to

¹⁰³ United Nations International Trade Statistics, Knowledgebase, <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/tradekb/Knowledgebase/50657/Bilateral-asymmetries>, consulted on 04/13/2020

¹⁰⁴ United Nations international Trade Statistics, Trade Valuation, <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/tradekb/Knowledgebase/50108/Trade-valuation>, consulted on 04/15/2020

¹⁰⁵ UN Trade Statistics, Trade Valuation, *ibidem*

¹⁰⁶ United Nations-Department of Economic and Social Affairs; IMTS Bilateral asymmetries – how to measure, analyze, reduce and way forward; (New York: United Nations); April 23rd, 2019; p. 10

¹⁰⁷ United Nations-Department of Economic and Social Affairs, IMTS Bilateral asymmetries – how to measure, analyze, reduce and way forward, *ibidem*, p. 11

country B for its interests. The natural resource is to be considered vital because is the pillar of country B's national economy and wealth. But in order to do so, I have to maintain the point of views of the two countries, which are represented by the two different ways to measure and count the trade flows.

The economic data about the Kazakh GDP by sector are downloaded from the Ministry of the National Economy of the Republic of Kazakhstan and come from those documents that are available in English. Each document compares the GDP data of the year analyzed with the GDP of the previous 12 months and calculate the variation in Kazakh tenge, in US dollars. In each document, GDP is divided into three parts -production of goods, production of services, and added value- and each part is divided into sub-sections according to the sector. A special part is dedicated to the energy source sector, the represents the main sector for the Kazakh economy. In this case, the description of the total value is divided according to the value produced by the three main economic sectors of the economy -primary, secondary, tertiary-.

Chapter 2

Conceptualization

In this chapter I will analyze the three variables of my hypothesis: despite the asymmetry between two countries, an importing country will meet resistance from the exporting country and will not be able to increase its power over it. In this hypothesis the independent variable -energy security meant as the security of demand for an importing country - does not lead to an increase of power-the dependent variable- over the exporting country and weakest country because the multi-vector policy -the intervening variable- will be the instrument the exporting and smallest country B will use to preserve its autonomy. In my case study, this is exactly what happened: because of the Chinese always increasing activities of the Chinese oil firms in the Kazakh oil sector, the Kazakh export was driven to other destinations. In this way, the Kazakh state prevented the chance that the revenues coming from the oil sector -which represents the pillar of the Kazakh economy- would come only from one source -in this case China- making the country economy dependent on the decisions taking abroad. In other words, there is not a linear causal relationship between the independent and the dependent variable. We are now going to analyze all the three variables.

Energy Security

The concept of energy security is one of the problems that many countries in the world have to face and it has become always more important over the last years. Many approaches have been used to study this problem. When you analyze energy security, you have to consider that there is not a single definition for the concept and that it can change according to the theoretical approaches I mentioned in the first chapter. According to the Realist tradition, energy security is a concept that should be applied in the same way to all the countries without taking into account the real necessities

of each case, and takes the name of “mercantilism”.¹⁰⁸ The main problem is that this concept was born from the energy crisis during the 1970s and since then it has developed following approaches different from Realism. Many scholars agree that energy security should be defined according to the kind of source, the geographical position of a country, the distance between importing and exporting states, economic factors, and political contexts.¹⁰⁹ This means to give to the concept a shape that is neither totally Realist nor totally Liberal.

One of the most famous definitions given to energy security was conceptualized by Yergin in 1988. He defined energy security as the objective “to assure adequate, reliable supplies of energy at reasonable prices in a way that do not jeopardize major national values and objectives”.¹¹⁰ Yergin emphasizes some aspects that in the following decades would have been developed by other scholars and that have brought to other definitions of energy security, focused on other perspectives. The main is that energy security is the consequence of a situation of asymmetry¹¹¹ in the distribution of the resources. It means that energy resources are geographically concentrated only in few spots in the world and that the exporting states that have to defend from this asymmetry are the manipulation of prices and resources operated by the importing states.¹¹²

Another paramount definition of energy security was given by Sovacool and Mukherjee in 2011. This definition is more technical than the one given by Yergin. The two authors define energy security as “a complex goal involving questions about how to equitably provide available, affordable, reliable, efficient, environmentally benign, properly governed and socially acceptable energy services”.¹¹³ In this definition five dimensions that are considered: availability, affordability,

¹⁰⁸ T. van de Graaf, B.K. Sovacool, A. Ghosh, F. Kern, M.T. Klare, in van de Graaf, Sovacool, Ghosh, and Klare, (ed) *ibidem*, p. 12

¹⁰⁹ J. Posaner, Held by Gas-The Price of Politics in Gazprom’s Long-Term Contracts with Central European Buyers (2009 to 2014), (Wiesbaden: Springer, 2020), p. 58

¹¹⁰ D. Yergin, ‘Energy Security in the 1990s’, Foreign Affairs, Vol. 68, N. 1 (1988), p. 111

¹¹¹ Yergin, *ibidem*, pp. 112-113

¹¹² Yergin, *ibidem*, p. 113

¹¹³ B. K. Sovacool and I. Mukherjee, ‘Conceptualizing and measuring energy security: A synthesized approach’, Energy, Vol. 36 (2011), p. 5344

technology development, sustainability, and regulation.¹¹⁴ For dimension there is a definition. Availability is the actual possession of the resources and infrastructure to transform them into energy; affordability is the access to energy services at the lowest price possible; technology development regards the new investment in the energy sector; sustainability involves the less impact on the environment; regulation concerns the application of good strategic policies in the market.¹¹⁵ This definition is maybe the most comprehensive ever given about energy security. But the authors also emphasize that it is impossible to give a definitive and proper definition of energy security, and the risk is to oscillate between a definition only applicable to specific case studies and a too wider one.¹¹⁶ In the following paragraphs I will gather both the typologies of definition.

Bridge and Le Billon are two scholars who also categorized different dimensions in energy security, which is defined “the maintenance of a reliable supply at prices that are affordable to consumers yet profitable enough to justify investments in future productions”.¹¹⁷ Their assumption is that energy security works like a normal market made up of offer and demand, those characteristics shape the inherent characteristics of the trade flow. Importing and exporting countries share one goal: guarantee energy security for their economic systems.¹¹⁸ This reciprocal relationship is at the base of the trade of energy security, and for the two scholars in the countries involved in this relationship must secure this flow of revenues by reducing the geostrategic and market vulnerabilities: for energy resources importing country the aim is to have always a direct and secure flow by trying to reduce external risks -it means political and economic tensions that can cut the flow- while for exporting country the goal is to maintain a significant source of economic revenues for the national economy by reducing the internal tensions.¹¹⁹ The dimensions that Bridge and Le Billon differentiate in the

¹¹⁴ Sovacool and Mukherjee, *ibidem*, p. 5343

¹¹⁵ Sovacool and Mukherjee, *ibidem*, p. 5345

¹¹⁶ Sovacool and Mukherjee, *ibidem*, p. 5343

¹¹⁷ Bridge and Le Billon, *ibidem*, p. 143

¹¹⁸ Bridge and Le Billon, *ibidem*, p. 35

¹¹⁹ Bridge and Le Billon, *ibidem*, p. 35 and p. 142

concept are availability, accessibility, affordability, and acceptability.¹²⁰ They do not further that the definition given by Sovacool. Also Van de Graaf and Zulli in the book edited by them partially use the dimensions listed above.

For Bridge and Le Billon, affordability is about guaranteeing a continuous economic access to energy resources through stable prices and good infrastructure.¹²¹ Availability is instead about the quantity of oil in the world reserves and the geographical location: according to the authors, this criterion is crucial for the petrostates like Kazakhstan because the presence of oilfields brings the interferences of external actors (mainly great powers) and increases the dependence on export and the sense of vulnerability.¹²² While for Van de Graaf and Zulli, affordability means low and stable prices in order to “increase planning and investment security”, and availability is related to the diversification of independent energy fuel and resources.¹²³ The last dimension the authors share is acceptability, that can be called social acceptability. In this case, the definition given by the authors match because in both cases, this dimension can be defined as the people’s opinion about an energy source in relation to the positive or negative effects on society.¹²⁴ The criterion of accessibility in Bridge and Le Billon is to be meant as the geographical access to the source, different from the economic access.¹²⁵ While Van de Graaf and Zulli stress more the ecological aspect, as a sign of a new approach about energy security that has spread in the last years; as a matter of fact the last criterion, sustainability, is defined as the effects of the use of an energy resource on the environment.¹²⁶ Amirov et al. also used this operationalization in their explanation about the meaning of energy security in Kazakhstan.¹²⁷ They differentiate from the previous authors because do not put

¹²⁰ Bridge and Le billon, *ibidem*, p. 145

¹²¹ Bridge and Le Billon, *ibidem*, pp. 159-160

¹²² Bridge and Le Billon, *ibidem*, p 149-151.

¹²³ Van de Graaf and Zulli in Van de Graaf et alia, *ibidem*, p. 52

¹²⁴ Bridge and Le Billon, *ibidem*, pp. 167-170; Van de Graaf and Zulli in van de Graaf, Sovacool, Ghosh, and Klare, (ed), *ibidem*, p.52

¹²⁵ Bridge and Le Billon, *ibidem*, pp. 151-152

¹²⁶ Van de Graaf and Zulli in van de Graaf, Sovacool, Ghosh, and Klare, (ed), *ibidem*, p. 51

¹²⁷ A. Amirov, M. Kozhukhova, G. Koshebeva et alia, ‘Economic and Energy Security of the Republic of Kazakhstan’, *International Journal of Energy Economics and Policy*, Vol. 8, N. 6 (2018), pp. 16-21

the need for functioning infrastructure in the affordability dimension, but rather in the dimension “efficiency”.¹²⁸

In some cases, the environmental aspect has been treated as the main one. That is the cases of the book “Energy Security in the Era of Climate Change”, in which one of the authors, Symon, sustains that all the energy policies are to be drawn from the ultimate goal that is economic externalities’ zero impact on the environment: The definition that Symon gives is “the attainment of energy supply and use patterns that are consistent with achieving a good life for all”, in other words, people’s energy need must not pollute the environment.¹²⁹ The last words are important because they integrate energy security in a wider discourse in which human security is the object. Energy security entered on this discourse in 2003 when the UN Commission on Human Security (CHS) enhanced human security by differentiating the two pillars of the concept: freedom for want and freedom from fear.¹³⁰ Energy security belongs to the first pillar.¹³¹

Another scholar who takes the economic interests of each country and the factors that influence energy resources trade as a starting point for the conceptualization is Bobo Lo. Lo states his conceptualization from the definition given by Stulberg, who defines energy security the “protection against the loss of welfare that may occur as a result of a change in price or availability of a strategic resource”, and apply this definition to the energy relations between Russia and China after 2008.¹³² Starting from the price factor, and the economic effects on sellers and buyers, Lo declares that energy security is the sum of security of supply and security of demand, that together create an “imperfect complementarity”.¹³³

¹²⁸ Amirov et alia, *ibidem*, p. 18

¹²⁹ Symon, J. ‘Introduction: Challenge to Energy Security in Era of Climate Change’ in Anceschi, L., and Symon, J., (ed) (London: MacMillan, 2012), p. 3

¹³⁰ M. Caballero-Anthony, S. L. Collin Kohn, S. Jamil, ‘Rethinking Energy Security: A Non-Traditional View of Human Security’, in M. Caballero-Anthony, Y. Chong, N. A. Putra (ed), Rethinking Energy Security in Asia: A Non-Traditional View on Human Security, (Heidelberg: Springer, 2012), p. 2

¹³¹ Caballero-Anthony, Collin Kohn, Jamil, in Caballero-Anthony, Chong, Putra (ed), *ibidem*, p. 2

¹³² Stulberg in Eder, *ibidem*, footnote p. 34.

¹³³ Lo in Eder, *ibidem*, p. 34

Dannreuther defines energy security in a way different from the operationalization of the concept in four dimensions. He argues that the lack of a universal definition is not a negative aspect and a case-by-case definition is actually a good way to compensate this problem.¹³⁴ In any case, energy security needs to be defined according to the political level it is applied (discrete vs. systemic); according to the different energy resources; and according to the distinction between the supply of energy resources or energy services.¹³⁵ In the first case, energy security is to be meant as the reactions to the perceived threat and risks caused at the political level either by single actors' voluntary acts or the processes at the international system.¹³⁶ The pattern of the reduction of threats and risks is also replicated in the different kinds of energy resources: in this case, the risks are linked to the role of the economic chain (with oil being the resource with fewer risks associated).¹³⁷ Finally, in the last case, Dannreuther says that energy security is the minimization to the risks and threats coming from the dependency on energy services.¹³⁸ If we compare this conceptualization with the previous ones, we see two important characteristics: the first one is that Dannreuther emphasizes the political implications of energy security, the second is that this theorization does not go away from the Bridge's and Le Billon's one because when it analyzes the political level, Dannreuther recognizes that suppliers and demanders have different priorities and different securities.¹³⁹

The different point of view of energy-supplying and energy-demanding countries has also been explained as a matter of 'sovereignty' or 'security' considerations.¹⁴⁰ According to Mathur, energy abundant states usually have the former approach because the way they can enjoy their reserve is seen as an act to reinforce their sovereignty in respect of external influence; while energy-deficient countries have the latter because they have to counter the market or supply risks.¹⁴¹ The approach can

¹³⁴ Dannreuther, *ibidem*, p. 11

¹³⁵ Dannreuther, *ibidem*, p. 10

¹³⁶ Dannreuther, *ibidem*, pp. 12-13

¹³⁷ Dannreuther, *ibidem*, pp. 15-18

¹³⁸ Dannreuther, *ibidem*, p. 19

¹³⁹ Dannreuther, *ibidem*, p. 12

¹⁴⁰ S. Mathur, 'An Introduction to Trade, WTO, and Energy Security: Linkages for India', in S. Mathur (ed), Trade, the WTO, and Energy Security-Mapping the Linkage for India, (Heidelberg: Springer, 2014), p. 3

¹⁴¹ Mathur in Mathur, *ibidem*, p. 3

be classified under the Realist umbrella: it emphasizes the role of the states, that use energy security in order to survive in the international arena. The second approach also is Realist: the “security” issue as meant by the authors is not the result of a process of securitization, but it is a mere fact of which society and public opinion do not need to be convinced of. This differentiation could perfectly be applied to my case study, because all the measures that China has undertaken belong to the second approach, while Kazakhstan, as I will explain, has acted in this perspective in order to maintain control over its resources. By following these approaches, we are able to have a definition of energy security for each state existing. In the following paragraphs, I will explain the different perspectives of the major actors involved in the energy market and that have geopolitical interests in Central Asia.

For the United States, the most important definition was given by the Department of Energy Security in 1985, which defined energy security the supply “of energy at reasonable cost” for “US consumers from both domestic and foreign sources”.¹⁴² The definition continues “It means that the nation is less vulnerable to disruptions in energy supply and that it is better prepared to handle them if occur”.¹⁴³ For the Russian Federation, energy security is about prioritizing access to consumer markets while keeping under the state control the energy infrastructure.¹⁴⁴ Russia and USA share some similar aspects: both of them are energy-producing countries that have to satisfy their internal markets and their geopolitical plans, in which energy plays a crucial role. For China, Leung applies the definition given by Yergin mentioned above to the Chinese case because there are all the characteristics given perfectly suit for China.¹⁴⁵ The point that Leung sustains as the main aspect of the Chinese energy security is the will to keep the prices at a “reasonable” level.¹⁴⁶ For India energy security is to be understood as the supply of energy in a lifetime -it means perpetual- “to all our citizens as well as meet their effective demand for sale and convenient energy to satisfy various needs

¹⁴² M. Mayer and P. Schouten, ‘Energy Security and Climate Security under Conditions of the Anthropocene’, in Anceschi and Symon (ed), op. cit. p. 21

¹⁴³ Mayer and Schouten, *ibidem*, p. 21

¹⁴⁴ Larsson quoted in Posaner, *ibidem*, p. 58.

¹⁴⁵ Leung, *ibidem*, p. 1332.

¹⁴⁶ Leung, *ibidem*, p. 1332

at affordable costs [...]”.¹⁴⁷ Central Asian countries are usually divided into two groups regarding the issue of energy security: one half is those of energy importers -Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan- and the other is the one of energy exporters -Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.¹⁴⁸ For these countries, the concept of energy security is linked to “the ability to guarantee a regular flow of revenues through the export of resources at a convenient price”.¹⁴⁹ Even international organizations and international forums have given their own definitions of energy security. The most prominent international organization in dealing with energy security is the IEA, which has defined energy security as the “uninterrupted availability of energy sources at an affordable price”.¹⁵⁰ The IEA’s definition is of course influenced by the oil shocks of the beginning of the 1970s that brought to the creation of the Agency because the definition stresses the continuous availability of energy as a starting point.

Some scholars have categorized the definition of energy security given in the past. These categorizations go beyond the normal approaches that I have described above, and they try to be as much methodologic as possible. This is the example of Szulecki, who differentiates three analytical approaches in the study of energy security regarding the goal the definition aims at: inductive, deductive, and abductive approach.¹⁵¹ The inductive approach tries to capture all the different technical and political shades that usually are used to define energy security.¹⁵² This category is the wider of the three and the most important definitions of energy security, like the one by Sovacool and the one by Yergin or Dannreuther, belong to this category. But also the one that reflects the points of view of the single states, because according to Szulecki, the perception of energy security in this category varies due to resource endowment, geographical location, and infrastructure.¹⁵³ The second

¹⁴⁷ Indian Planning Commission quoted in Mathur, (ed), *ibidem*, p. 4

¹⁴⁸ L. Anceschi, ‘Energy Governance and Climate Change: Central Asia’s Uneasy Nexus’, in Anceschi and Symon (ed), *op. cit.*, p. 181

¹⁴⁹ Anceschi in Anceschi and Symon, (ed), *ibidem*, p. 182

¹⁵⁰ Posaner, *ibidem*, p. 58

¹⁵¹ K. Szulecki, ‘The Multiple Faces of Energy Security: An Introduction’, in K. Szulecki (ed), Energy Security in Europe: Divergent Perceptions and Policy Challenges, (Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), p. 7

¹⁵² Szulecki in Szulecki, *ibidem*, p. 7

¹⁵³ Szulecki in Szulecki, *ibidem*, p. 8

category is the abductive approach that less popular in the scholarship and has as a starting point the observation of the context.¹⁵⁴ Then, from this, the author gives an explanation; in this case, the definition of energy security does not act as an object.¹⁵⁵ As an example of this approach, Szulecki takes Ciută as an example, because his pragmatic explanation of energy security as driven by different “logics” according to the situation.¹⁵⁶ The last approach is called deductive, which tries to conceptualize the idea “analytically sharp and useful” to create a definition that meets all the scientific requirements and then to be applied without considering the specific cases of application.¹⁵⁷

The concept of energy security has also been discussed by academia from an opposite point of view. In some cases, scholars do not talk of energy security, but rather of “energy insecurity”. This is a view of the concept from a different angle that actually makes the conceptualization more difficult because the scholars, just like for energy security, do not agree on the definition. Grigas defines energy insecurity as the “constrained access to supplies or acute dependence on undiversified import”¹⁵⁸ and Mathur defines it as “the loss of welfare that may occur as the result of a change in price or availability of energy”.¹⁵⁹ The definition by Grigas is more similar to the definitions of energy security mentioned above because she theorized a relation of interdependence between the supplying country and the importing country, which has two options to face its needs.¹⁶⁰ The first option is called “politics of supply” and it is a set of economic and political tools to achieve its political and security interests in the energy market.¹⁶¹ The second option is called “politics of dependence” and it differs from the previous because it is usually pursued by the importing countries that are in a disproportionate position of dependence in relation to the exporting country.¹⁶² The relation between the importing and exporting countries is called “interdependence” or “asymmetrical degrees of

¹⁵⁴ Szulecki in Szulecki, *ibidem*, p. 9

¹⁵⁵ Szulecki in Szulecki, *ibidem*, p. 9

¹⁵⁶ Szulecki in Szulecki, *ibidem*, p. 9

¹⁵⁷ Szulecki in Szulecki, *ibidem*, p. 10

¹⁵⁸ A. Grigas, The New Geopolitics of Natural Gas, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2017), p. 5

¹⁵⁹ Mathur, *ibidem*, p. 4

¹⁶⁰ Grigas, *ibidem*, p. 17

¹⁶¹ Grigas, *ibidem*, p. 17

¹⁶² Grigas, *ibidem*, p. 17

dependence”.¹⁶³ Grigas theorized this framework for gas and not for oil, and there is a third factor that she considers in this relation: the transit countries. In the gas market transit countries play a crucial role because they count on a set of policies called “politics of transit”.¹⁶⁴ The definition of energy security given by Mathur is more economically oriented, while the one by Grigas is based on geopolitical problems of the importing countries.

Operationalization

I will give a definition of energy security based on three factors that I found common in all the definitions previously explained: the distinction between exporting and importing country, the economic aspects, and the geopolitical consequences. Energy security can be defined as the maintenance of a constant flow of export of the national energy resources (security of supply) that meets the needs of an importing country looking for constant and diversified flow from different countries (security of demand). For the measurement, the indicators I will use are the percentage of energy revenues on the total annual export for exporting countries and the diversification of destinations and importing countries. The first indicator explains the weight of the oil revenues in the trade balance of a state as an economic sector. In order to maintain its security of supply constant, each producer state must keep the same percentage of revenues coming from the export of crude oil. The analysis of the 16 most important oil export states in the period show that the level of the revenues may oscillate,¹⁶⁵ and reduce -or increase- the security of supply of a country. I divide the level of revenues into a five-grade scale according to the percentage of revenues on the total export – “low”,

¹⁶³ Grigas, *ibidem*, p. 14.

¹⁶⁴ Grigas, *ibidem*, p 13.

¹⁶⁵ United Nations-Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2014 International Trade Statistics Yearbook-Vol. II- Trade by Product, p. 235, table n.2; 2015 International Trade Statistics Yearbook-Vol. II- Trade by Product, p. 235 table n.2; 2016 International Trade Statistics Yearbook- Vol. II- Trade by Product, p. 235, table n. 2; 2017 International Trade Statistics Yearbook -Vol II- Trade by Product, p. 97, table n. 2; 2018 International Trade Statistics Yearbook -Vol. II- Trade by Product, p. 95, table n. 2. The sixteen countries of my measurement are those that in the year of my analysis altogether represented at least 80% of the total export of the good. This ranking changed between 2014 and 2018, but Kazakhstan always represented a portion of the total export fluctuating between 3.0% and 3.7% of the total.

“moderate”, “high”, “very high”, and “extremely high” level. The “low” level means that the energy-exporting country can afford to keep for itself the energy sources -crude oil is maximum the 5% of the total export sector-; “moderate” means that the revenues from the energy resources are an important source for the export sector, even though not paramount -up to 15%-; “high” means that the producer counts on the revenues as one of the most important assets in the export sector and the trade balance -between 15% and 50% of export-; “very high” means that the revenues from energy resources are the basis of the trade balance and the economy -between 35% and 50%-; “extremely high” means that the energy sector is the only source of revenues for the export sector and sustain by itself the trade balance -crude oil represents more than one half of the export.

Table n.1: Energy Security Indicators

Security of Supply	Percentage of Revenues	Security of Demand	Number of supplying countries
Extremely High	> 50%	High	12
Very High	35% – 50%	High	11
High	15% – 35%	Medium	10
Moderate	5% – 15%	Medium	9
Low	< 5%	Low	8

The second indicator, the one for importing countries, explains how wide and differentiated is the provision of crude oil coming from exporting countries for importing countries. Like in the first indicator and the data for the analysis of my case study, the data are taken by the UN Comtrade website.¹⁶⁶ I calculated the average number of energy suppliers for the top 15 crude importing

¹⁶⁶ UN Comtrade website, <https://comtrade.un.org/data/>, consulted on 05/22/2020

countries in the world, I used this average as a medium level scale to calculate the security of demand. According to this scale, when an importing country gets 90% of its crude oil from 9 or 10 countries its level of security of demand is “medium”, below this level security of demand is “low”, above is “high”.¹⁶⁷ The two dimensions should lead to an idea of energy security in which both the parts, supplier and buyer, strengthen the flow between them in order to earn revenues -the exporting country- and to have the wider access to oil sources -the importing country.

The Concept of Power

Power has maybe been the core concept of politics and international relations for many years. In the last two centuries, this concept has been analyzed not only as a relationship between states, but also between agents acting in the society, and in this last classification also the relationships between two persons have been studied as relations of power. But power had been analyzed even before. One of the main authors to study the concept of power in the modern age was Niccolò Machiavelli who considered power the purpose of politics to be measured by the extent to which is achieved.¹⁶⁸ In the following centuries, a first peak in the discussion was the 17th century when Hobbes published his famous “The Leviathan”. Hobbes defined power as the “present means” of a man “to obtain some future apparent Good”¹⁶⁹. This definition is of course one of the most important in the discussion of the topics because it was given in a period in which intellectuals in Europe were discussing the roots of the absolute power of the European kings in that century. The main aspect of his thought is that power comes from the freedom of the men who decide to give up on it in order to protect themselves

¹⁶⁷ According to the UN Trade Yearbook 2018, p. 97 table n.3, the top fifteen importing countries in the world are China, USA, India, Japan, South Korea, Germany, Netherlands, Spain, Italy, France, Singapore, Thailand, United Kingdom, Belgium.

¹⁶⁸ L. D. Hayes, ‘The Utility of the Concept of Power in the Study of International Relations’, *Social Sciences*, Vol. 43, N. 3 (1968) p. 153

¹⁶⁹ M. A. Wenman, ‘Power’ in I. Mackenzie, *Political Concept-A Reader and Guide*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005, p. 371

from each other *-homo homini lupus*.¹⁷⁰ The main aspect of his view is that power, even the power of the king that at that time meant sovereignty, was established on a relationship between the conflicting agents of the society, the single men.¹⁷¹ By word of Hobbes himself, mankind has a “Perpetual and restless desire for Power after power, that ceases only in Death”.¹⁷² If we were to have a complete picture of how power was meant in the same century, then we must compare Hobbes with Locke’s idea of power given in his work “Essay of Civil Government”. The main difference between the two authors is in the feelings that found power in society. If for Hobbes men were moved by fear and self-protection, for Locke power -that he means as legitimation of the state- is created by the spontaneous act of the men acting in the society, completely free from constrains and fear, and their consensus.¹⁷³ The word “Power” is used for the first time by Locke to define the branches of the government. The conceptualization of Hobbes and Locke were the most important for centuries.

A new idea of power as one of the pillars of the society came in the second half of the 19th century thanks to the works of Max Weber. Weber defined power as “the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance”.¹⁷⁴ This definition is important because is an evolution of the definitions of the previous centuries. Weber’s concept is about the idea of dominance and control over social affairs¹⁷⁵ and the concept may be understood as “power over”. For Weber power is a casual relationship in which the main actor is the state in what he recognizes being its main prerogative: the practice of violence.¹⁷⁶ So the probability that an actor will follow what the other actor wants is linked to the practice of power and the ability to exercise it. Power as domination is the essence of politics that, because of it, is to be considered a fight.¹⁷⁷ So, just like among people, among states the subordinated relationship is caused by the

¹⁷⁰ JJ. Chevalier, Le Grandi Opere del Pensiero Politico, (Bologna: Società editrice il Mulino, 1998), Ch. 3

¹⁷¹ Wenman, *ibidem*, p 137

¹⁷² Hobbes in Hayes, *ibidem*, p. 153

¹⁷³ Chevalier, *ibidem*, Ch. 5

¹⁷⁴ Weber in B. A. Carroll, ‘The Cult of Power’, The Journal of Conflict Resolutions, Vol. 16, N. 4 (1972), p. 588

¹⁷⁵ Carroll, *ibidem*, p. 588

¹⁷⁶ S. Guzzini, ‘El Poder en Max Weber’, Relaciones Internacionales, N. 30 (2015-2016) p. 103

¹⁷⁷ Guzzini, ‘El Poder en Max Weber’, p. 103

actions -praxis- of a state in its inherent priority.¹⁷⁸ If we compare this idea with the concept of Hobbes, and generally of the 17th century, we see that there is no continuity in terms of nature, because the latter is understood as “power to”.¹⁷⁹ It means that power is a capacity that an agent possesses,¹⁸⁰ while in the former is the expression of domination and violence, a cultural characteristic of Western society.¹⁸¹

Power in contemporary Political Science

To have a more comprehensive discourse about the idea of power in the field of political science, we must go to the 20th century. After WWI and WWII, the debate about the concept began a pillar of the new discipline and in particular in International Relations. So, the state became the theoretical unit for the study of power. In this period realism was the only theoretical framework. Realism has given a great impulse to the discourse and the most important scholar in defining power in this framework was Hans Morgenthau. Morgenthau theorized his idea of power and politics at the beginning of the Cold War. His thought was influenced by Max Weber, but his idea of power and politics were shaped by the academic engagement with Carl Schmitt.¹⁸² Power is pursued in politics,¹⁸³ that is the basic human activity. The basic definition of this relationship is “man’s control over the minds and actions of other men”.¹⁸⁴ It can be defined as a mean to an end, and it is the determining motive of any political action, and it is physically based on a relationship.¹⁸⁵ Applied to politics, the objective of Morgenthau’s study, power is “the relations between those that exercise

¹⁷⁸ Guzzini, ‘El Poder en Max Weber’, p. 103

¹⁷⁹ Wenman, *ibidem*, p. 371

¹⁸⁰ Wenman, *ibidem*, p. 371

¹⁸¹ Carroll, *ibidem*, p. 588

¹⁸² H. Pichler, ‘The Godfathers of ‘Truth’: Max Weber and Carl Schmitt in Morgenthau’s Theory of Power Politics’, Review of International Studies, Vol. 24, N. 2 (1998) p. 186

¹⁸³ J.J. Mearsheimer, La Tragedia delle Grandi Potenze, (Roma: Luiss University Press, 2014) p. 44

¹⁸⁴ Morgenthau in Carroll, *ibidem*, p. 586

¹⁸⁵ K. J. Holsti, ‘The Concept of Power in the Study of International Relations’, Background, Vol. 7 N. 4 (1969) p. 179

power and those on which it is exercised”.¹⁸⁶ In international politics, what the states compete for is the superiority of a nation over the others. Once a nation reaches this superiority through power, the others react to reduce the gap of power. This mechanism is called “balance of power” and it is the natural mechanism of international politics.¹⁸⁷ The interest of all the states is to gain more and more power in order to have political superiority in the international arena. This power maximization triggers a perpetual mechanism -the struggle for power- which is in other words the struggle for the survival of each state.¹⁸⁸

Morgenthau measured the power in terms both material capabilities¹⁸⁹ like geography, national resources, industrial capacity, the state of military preparedness, and population,¹⁹⁰ but for some authors include also immaterial capabilities like national character, national morale, quality of diplomacy, and the quality of government.¹⁹¹ The presence of the latter category may be considered an intrusion in classical Realism, but not all the scholars agree on that point. If Pichler points out that according to Morgenthau the power struggle is the ‘objective’ order of international relations,¹⁹² Williams sustains that ideas and morals had a role in defining the idea of power and politics in Morgenthau’s theory.¹⁹³ The real concept of power meant by Morgenthau, explains Williams, stands in the fact that power is to be understood as interest,¹⁹⁴ and because of that it is not a rigid idea but rather a flexible one, that can be applied not only to politics but to any aspect of social life.¹⁹⁵ Williams continues by saying that the possible application to any sphere of society makes power in politics separated from any other kinds of power, that balanced the binary relations between political power

¹⁸⁶ M. Creus, ‘El Concepto de Poder en las Relaciones Internacionales y la Necesidad de Encorporara Nuevos Enfoques’, Estudios Internacionales, Vol. 45, (2013) p. 66

¹⁸⁷ M. F. Rasheed, ‘The Concept of Power in International Relations’, Pakistan Review, Vol. 48, N. 1, p 95

¹⁸⁸ Pichler, *ibidem*, p. 192

¹⁸⁹ Creus, *ibidem*, p. 67

¹⁹⁰ Rasheed, *ibidem*, p. 97

¹⁹¹ Rasheed, *ibidem*, p. 97 and Creus, *ibidem*, p. 67

¹⁹² Pichler, *ibidem*, p. 188

¹⁹³ M. C. Williams, ‘Why Ideas Matter in International Relations: Hans Morgenthau, Classical Realism, and the Moral Construction of Power Politics’, International Organization, Vol. 58, (2004), p. 639

¹⁹⁴ Williams, *ibidem*, p. 639

¹⁹⁵ Williams, *ibidem*, pp. 639-640

and violence.¹⁹⁶ In conclusion, if the concept of power as meant by Morgenthau could be applied to other parts of the society, it means that the relationship is constrained by the obligation between those who exercise power and those who are under that power, gaining an ethical dimension.¹⁹⁷

The following generation of scholars was strongly influenced by Morgenthau in defining power. The debate was also helped by the evolution of the Cold War and the investment of the two superpowers -USA and USSR- in their atomic programs. At the end of the 1950s, and at the beginning of the next one, some of the most important definitions of power were given. The one given by Robert Dahl is probably among the most important. Dahl's definition of power is "A has power over B to the extent that he can get B to do something that B would not otherwise do".¹⁹⁸ In his analysis, Dahl goes behind Morgenthau's idea even if he shares the basic point: that power is a relationship, even if Dahl calls it "connection".¹⁹⁹ This connection must exist beforehand between the two actors. This connection is a type of causation²⁰⁰ triggered by the behavior of the two actors.²⁰¹ Different from Morgenthau, Dahl sustains that power is not a mechanical relation in which A's will affects and causes immediately B's reaction, but there is a time lag in which B's reaction must be triggered.²⁰² B then never has the same reaction: according to the input received by A, this reaction is variable. The kind of variation B will have, represents the scope of A's power, that it is measured by the probability that b is going to react.²⁰³ Turcsanyi classified this idea of power in the typology "power to".²⁰⁴ The main factors are the means that A possesses to cause B's reaction,²⁰⁵ means that can be called capabilities. Unfortunately, the definition of Dahl does not specify the kind of capabilities, but what

¹⁹⁶ Williams, *ibidem*, p. 645

¹⁹⁷ Williams, *ibidem*, p. 649

¹⁹⁸ R. A. Dahl, 'The Concept of Power', *Behavioral Science*, Vol. 2, N. 3, (1964), p. 202

¹⁹⁹ Dahl, *ibidem*, p. 204

²⁰⁰ D. A. Baldwin, 'Power Analysis and World Politics: New Trends versus Old Tendencies', *World Politics*, Vol. 39, N. 2 (1979), p. 161

²⁰¹ Dahl, *ibidem*, p. 203

²⁰² Dahl, *ibidem*, p. 204

²⁰³ Dahl, *ibidem*, p. 203

²⁰⁴ Turcsanyi, R. Q. 'Assessing the Power of China: Insight from the Conceptual Thinking about Power', *Journal of Chinese Political Science*, Vol. 22 (2017), p. 478

²⁰⁵ Dahl, *ibidem*, p. 203

he emphasizes is that any actor who possesses capabilities has to mobilize all of them for his purpose.²⁰⁶ His definition is meant to concentrate on the main aspect, and the same author specifies that it is not easy to be applied to different specific cases.²⁰⁷ One of the critics that the following literature has made to Dahl's concept is that he emphasizes too much the purpose of actor A, giving more importance to the control of outcomes than actors.²⁰⁸ For this reason, his definition has been classified as "outcome definition".²⁰⁹

Variations and Criticisms

One of the authors that moved further the definition given by Dahl is Holsti. His definition of power is: "the act or acts that A commits toward B so the B pursues a course of behavior in accordance with A's wishes".²¹⁰ The concept can be broken down into three elements: power as a process, power as an influence, and power as a reaction.²¹¹ According to Holsti power works like a process, and just like in Dahl it works in time. The authors had different opinions about the idea of power as 'influence'. Dahl used the words "power", "influence" and "control" interchangeably,²¹² while in Holsti influence is just aspect of power and it is the main instrument that a country possesses, and capabilities are used to improve the influence over B.²¹³ Capabilities, according to Holsti, can be material or immaterial, but in any case, they must be used in accordance with the ends.²¹⁴ In international relations, states are the actors of the relationships, and there are three forms in the relation of influence between them: relation of consensus, the relation of manipulation, and the relation of coercion; each relation reflects a different grade of influence from cooperation to coercion.²¹⁵ What is important here is that relations

²⁰⁶ Holsti, *ibidem*, p. 185

²⁰⁷ Dahl, *ibidem*, p. 202

²⁰⁸ Baldwin, *ibidem*, p. 179

²⁰⁹ Baldwin, *ibidem*, p. 179

²¹⁰ Holsti, *ibidem*, p. 180

²¹¹ Holsti, *ibidem*, p. 182

²¹² Dahl, *ibidem*, p. 202

²¹³ Holsti, *ibidem*, p. 181

²¹⁴ Holsti, *ibidem*, p. 181

²¹⁵ Holsti, *ibidem*, p. 192

are not fixed, then the interactions between two countries can variate in the time and go up and down from a relation to another.²¹⁶

This graduality of power is also at the center of the conceptualization done by Miller. His definition of power –“power is the perceived capacity of the legitimate leader(s) of sovereign political unit to imposes his (their) self-conscious will on the legitimate leader(s) of another (other) sovereign political unit(s) in a particular relational instance”- underlines the difference between the intensity of the preference of legitimate leaders of a state and the actual actions brought about. This difference is called “effective power” and it is measured by the range of options that the legitimate leaders in the two countries of the relationship have and the scale of preference of the leaders.²¹⁷ The role that Miller gives to the legitimate leader of a state is crucial because he goes beyond the simple the states are black boxes and have inherent goals.

A curious case is the definition of power is given by Clark. Clark’s definition of power is made up of 15 different dimensions.²¹⁸ These dimensions are studied at the local level but according to the author can be applied to other frameworks like international relations.²¹⁹ The dimensions are interpersonal influence; anticipated reactions; direct and indirect influence; reciprocity; action and inaction; the pattern of value distribution; legitimation; the number of participation in the decision; the scope of power; visibility; power bases; application of power; efficiency of power application; allocation of resources; stratification of power.²²⁰ These dimensions do not work altogether at the same time, but according to the cases some are more prominent than others.²²¹ This definition represents an exception to the general debate that in that decade saw also some critics to the mainstream idea. The last critic was made by Hayes. He criticized the weaknesses of the discourse’s

²¹⁶ Holsti, *ibidem*, p. 192

²¹⁷ R. C. Miller, ‘Some Comments on the Inter-Nation Level’, Background, Vo. 7 N. 4 (1964),p. 195

²¹⁸ T. N. Clark, R. L. Simpson and D. M. Olson, ‘The Concept of Power: Some Overemphasized and Underrecognized Dimensions- An Examination with Special References to the Local Community’, The Southern Social Science Quarterly, Vol. 48, N. 3 (1967) , p. 271

²¹⁹ Clark, *ibidem*, p. 271

²²⁰ Clark, *ibidem*, p. 272

²²¹ Clark, *ibidem*, p. 272

basis. In his opinion, power is “a relational concept which implies the interaction or the juxtaposition of two or more persons or group of persons” that if applied for states can be defined “State A got State B to do X”.²²² Even if Hayes does simplify the definition of power in this way, he presents a critic to the classical conceptualization of power in three points: it does not determine the amount of power possessed by the states, the differences of goals among the states, and the nature of the power itself.²²³ This critic appears weak and unjustified if we consider that the definition of Hayes is one of the most simplified in the field. But in my opinion, it gave the basis for further developments of the concept of power that would take place in the following years.

Power according to sociology

In that period the concept was being analyzed also by other scholars belonging to different backgrounds. The sociologist Talcott Parson in 1963 gave a singular explanation of the concept of power by comparing it to the economy. As a sociologist, Parson emphasizes the mechanism of power not among a group of states, but among a group of individuals. He is not the only scholar that in the second half of the last century who analyzed power. Also Hannah Arendt and gave their contribution to the development of the concept.

Parson starts from the assumption that in the society, political and economic aspects work in the same way because they share some parallelisms.²²⁴ The first parallelism is that both politics and economy are abstract; the second aspect is that they are applied to collectivity according to the actions and the goals of the collectivity itself; the third is that the collective actions are to be understood in politics as an equivalent of production in the economy.²²⁵ In this comparison, power represents for

²²² Hayes, *ibidem*, p. 154

²²³ Hayes, *ibidem*, p. 155

²²⁴ T. Parsons, ‘On the Concept of Power’, Proceeding of the American Philosophical Society, Vol. 107, N. 3 (1963), p. 233

²²⁵ Parsons, *ibidem*, p. 233

politics what money represents for the economic systems: the fuel that makes the system works.²²⁶ In Parsons' words power is "the generalized capacity to secure the performance of binding obligations by units in a system of collective organization when the obligations are legitimized with reference to their on collective goals"²²⁷ The formal definition of power given by Parsons is a complex explanation in which he defined two aspects of power: legitimation and generalization. Generalization of power implies that the power has just a "symbolic" meaning and it is not material, and it can go from an individual to other thanks to "legitimation", that is parallel to confidence in the economy.²²⁸ Those that can get to achieve the confidence of the other individuals in the society are more likely to lead the mechanisms of the society against those who do not share their positions and ideas. This position is the same that Arendt uses when she explains her idea of power: she defined power as the "human ability not just to act but to act in concert".²²⁹ This definition goes along with the idea that there is a correlation between power and authority.²³⁰ As we see, these definitions stay inside some other conceptualizations, like the one by Miller and the one by Clark, in which legitimation was an important aspect. What pushes Parsons beyond of these authors is that once an individual has been legitimized, he gains power from others that lose it. This means that power is a zero-sum game.²³¹ As we saw previously, even Clark talked about the zero-sum problem about the concept of power. The critics he moves to Parsons' idea is that there are a few chances to see this possibility applied to an empirical case.²³² The typical examples are the power-vacuum situations in which a country -or an individual- in a political system increases its power as a consequence of the diminishing power of others, for Clark situations in which both the states' gain are unlikely to happen.²³³

²²⁶ Parsons, *ibidem*, p. 236

²²⁷ Parsons, *ibidem*, p. 237

²²⁸ Parsons, *ibidem*, p. 238

²²⁹ Arendt in Wenman, *ibidem*, p. 372

²³⁰ Wenman, *ibidem*, p. 372

²³¹ Clark, *ibidem*, p. 282

²³² Clark, *ibidem*, p. 282

²³³ Clark, *ibidem*, p. 282

The revival of the Realism

In the decade of the 1970s, new conceptualizations of power came up, reshaping the general idea of power in International Relations. In that decade, scholars started to differentiate the typologies of power according to different frameworks and situations. Carroll in his essay ‘The Cult of Power’ analyzed the idea throughout the meaning that power may have in different interpretations. He differentiated 9 different types of power: disintegrative power; inertial power; innovative power; legitimizing power; expressive power; explosive power; the power of resistance; collective power; population power.²³⁴ I think that the contribution by Carroll was paramount for the development of the concept because he explains how power can go beyond the discourse of power as simple ‘influence’ or ‘authority’. This classification also a couple of aspects to emphasize: the first is that it passes the idea of power as a consequence of a legitimation process as emphasized by Parson, Clark, and Miller; the second is that it passes the idea of power as ‘autonomy’ of a state to gain its national security.²³⁵ All his kinds of powers are consequences of actions inside the society, but they are completed just by some portions of it, according to the rules, goals, or capabilities belonging to these portions of society.²³⁶ The point is that in these types, rules and goals could be set not by the affected group, but from other groups. I want to describe some examples here. The first kind of power - disintegrative power- belongs to basically everyone, because aims at the collapse of social organizations or political organizations; so it can be used by large masses.²³⁷ Expressive power is the power of the ‘powerless’, who use it to demonstrate their discontent about mechanisms and norms in the society.²³⁸ Finally, the last kind of power -migratory power- has features of both the previous two because it is of the ‘powerless’ and used by large masses, but in this case the masses can be influenced by policies that do not aim at the collapse of a political system.²³⁹

²³⁴ Carroll, *ibidem*, p. 608

²³⁵ Carroll, *ibidem*, p. 591

²³⁶ Carroll, *ibidem*, p. 609-614

²³⁷ Carroll, *ibidem*, p. 609

²³⁸ Carroll, *ibidem*, p. 613

²³⁹ Carroll, *ibidem*, p. 614

In 1972 was publishes “Theory of International Politics” by Kenneth Waltz. In this book, the author discusses power just in respect of the means that a state possesses.²⁴⁰ The consideration Waltz gave to power is a merely quantitative problem: those who have more material possibilities, have more power in the international arena. So, power is a mere quantitative concept.²⁴¹ If we compare Waltz with Morgenthau, the idea of power does not aim at conquering or balancing other states, because Waltz explains that power is used by states just to survive and not to destroy rivals, and because of that his theory is called ‘structural realism’ or ‘defensive realism’.²⁴² This point was against the one expressed by Williams that we discussed above, but in the Realist framework is important because thirty years later Mearsheimer would develop a theory in which power plays a central point in relation to the actual means that a state possesses. Mearsheimer in his ‘offensive realism’ theory defines power as “the currency of great powers politics, and States compete for it”.²⁴³ For ‘great powers’ he meant those countries that in the international arena are the ones able to shape the balance of power. He compares power and money in the same way Parsons did, with the only difference that in his description of the international arena, Mearsheimer does not consider it ruled by the same mechanisms that belong to economics.²⁴⁴ What Mearsheimer emphasizes of power is the possibility to be measured in terms of military capabilities for great powers, in this way economic power is called ‘latent power’ that is not the proper way to measure the capabilities of the great powers; the military capabilities of a country are the best way, and in particular the land military capabilities.²⁴⁵ The great powers that can maintain the military supremacy on the land will be able to emerge as the main actors of the international arena. In the case of Mearsheimer’s theory, power is understood as pure ‘power over’.

²⁴⁰ Creus, *ibidem*, p. 68

²⁴¹ Creus, *ibidem*, p. 68

²⁴² Mearsheimer, *ibidem*, p. 49

²⁴³ Mearsheimer, *ibidem*, p. 42

²⁴⁴ Mearsheimer, *ibidem*, p. 42

²⁴⁵ Mearsheimer, *ibidem*, p. 97

Nye and the new ideas of Power

I consider the theory by Waltz and Mearsheimer a reaction of the Realist theorists, especially in the years in which some scholars tried to redefine the concept of power in more complex terms. Among them, the one who probably gave a total new contribution was Joseph Nye. His first contribution was with the book “Power and Interdependence” published in 1977 and co-authored with Robert Keohane. The idea of power that the authors explain is the one of a bijective relation between states that has three different explanations.²⁴⁶ The first is that interdependence is a mere interconnection between two states; the second explanation is that interdependence is an interaction which implies a cost for both the parts; the third explanation -the one preferred by the authors- is that the costs of the relationship -in other words, how much the parts have to give up on- are equally distributed.²⁴⁷ In this way, power implies a lost, a position completely distant from the ‘zero-sum’ game as pictured by Parsons and Clark. Both the parts lose, but the meaning of this lost stays in the way a mutual potential power is created.²⁴⁸

The role of power is then explained by distinguishing between “sensibility” and “vulnerability”.²⁴⁹ The former is the scale of grades that every country possesses to answer any external situation; while the latter is the “relative availability and the costs of the alternatives that actors have to handle”.²⁵⁰ Between the two, vulnerability is the prominent one because is the factor that will be considered the most in case of political choice.²⁵¹ At this point is important to have focus on the capabilities of the states. We already saw that according to Morgenthau and Mearsheimer, capabilities are to be understood as material capabilities and more specifically, in terms of military capabilities, that are the only ones able to give the measure of how strong a country is. We also saw that for Holsti, capabilities can be both material and immaterial. In this regard, Keohane and Nye

²⁴⁶ Baldwin, *ibidem*, p. 175

²⁴⁷ Baldwin, *ibidem*, pp. 175-176

²⁴⁸ Baldwin, *ibidem*, p. 177

²⁴⁹ Creus, *ibidem*, p. 69

²⁵⁰ Creus, *ibidem*, p. 69

²⁵¹ Creus, *ibidem*, p. 70

again go beyond the first ideas by criticizing the military capabilities like the only ones to consider, but they also go beyond the Holsti's opinion. They affirm that to use military force to measure power is ambiguous and debatable.²⁵² Military force would be the best option to measure power if you would ignore the costs of the relationships,²⁵³ but this is an extreme case that only took place when economics is put apart and it is not enough to overcome military power.²⁵⁴ Economic capabilities are also to consider in the range of capabilities and they are as important as military force. The reason is simple: Keohane and Nye sustain that power has a contextual nature, so it is linked to the policy-contingency framework.²⁵⁵

Nye did not stop to this analysis of power. His studies moved forward and his main contribution to the discourse is connected to the conceptualization of "soft power" in 1990. Soft power was defined "the ability to get what one wants through persuasion or attraction other than coercion"²⁵⁶ and later "to obtain the results that you want with the force of attraction, without using the offered incentives".²⁵⁷ The main point of these two definitions is that power has changed because capabilities have changed. The mere military power belongs to states, but in a modern world, there are some other actors that play important roles in international politics.²⁵⁸ The new capabilities are those regarding economics, technology, and education because they are able to change the behavior of the state.²⁵⁹ Nye wrote that in the post-Cold War period, and in my opinion this is to take into account in his theory: it is not a case that the rise of the academic debate was in the 1960s. In that period the confrontation between USSR and the USA was a simple race in the disposition of missiles in geostrategic points in order to keep the enemy on target, while other actors had risen since the 1970s making the situation more complex. Despite the change in the capabilities, Nye does not deny that

²⁵² Baldwin, *ibidem*, p. 181

²⁵³ Baldwin, *ibidem*, p. 182

²⁵⁴ Baldwin, *ibidem*, p. 182

²⁵⁵ Baldwin, *ibidem*, p. 169

²⁵⁶ Nye, quoted in E. J. Wilson III, 'Hard Power, Soft Power, Smart Power', *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 616, (2018), p. 114

²⁵⁷ J. S. Nye Jr., *Leadership e Potere-Hard, Soft, Smart Power*, (Bari: Editori Laterza, 2010) p. 34

²⁵⁸ J. S. Nye Jr., 'Soft power', *Foreign Policy*, N. 80 (1990) p. 161

²⁵⁹ Nye 'Soft power', *ibidem*, p. 154

power is a relation and the interdependence between states.²⁶⁰ But what he affirms is that interdependence does not always mean harmony: the relation may be balanced in a way that implies a manipulation from one state to the other.²⁶¹ Furthermore, the interdependence is variable according to the sphere in which it exists: security, trade, finance.²⁶² We notice that Nye still explains interdependence in the same terms which he used in 1977, what he adds is that the ability of the states, in this case lays in the creation of a strong linkage with another state despite being vulnerable.²⁶³

A critic to Nye was moved by Rothman, who criticized this dichotomy between hard and soft power.²⁶⁴ According to Rothman, the way Nye discusses power is essentially idealized and he suggests that hard and soft power belong to the same spectrum of power and united through four categories that create a continuum of power types.²⁶⁵ These four categories are command and military resources; economic forms of power; agenda-setting and institutional control; framing and rhetoric.²⁶⁶ Hard power and soft power as spectrums of the same range is the only novelty added in this critic: the four power types are the four ways that Nye analyzed about how power can be exercised: one belongs to hard power -military resources- and three to soft power -economic forms of power, agenda-setting, and framing.²⁶⁷ The agenda-setting type and the framing type of power, have brought some scholars to consider another kind of power -normative power- like a twin of soft power, but others, like Kawalski disagree with this idea.²⁶⁸ For Kawalski, normative power is the quality of making your point of view socially accepted in International Relations which is characterized by asymmetry relations.²⁶⁹ If for Nye in a relation between states, one state co-opted the preferences of its partner

²⁶⁰ Nye 'Soft power', *ibidem*, p. 165

²⁶¹ Nye 'Soft power', *ibidem*, p. 160

²⁶² Nye 'Soft power', *ibidem*, p. 160

²⁶³ Nye, 'Soft Power', *ibidem*, p. 159

²⁶⁴ S. B. Rothman, 'Revising the Soft Power Concept: What are the Means and Mechanism of Soft Power?', *Journal of Political Power*, Vol. 4, N. 1, (2011) p. 50

²⁶⁵ Rothman, *ibidem*, p. 50

²⁶⁶ Rothman, *ibidem*, pp. 51-54

²⁶⁷ Nye, 'Soft power', p. 166

²⁶⁸ E. Kawalski, 'The Shadows of Normative Power in Asia: Framing the International Agency of China, India, and Japan', *Pacific Focus*, Vol. 29, N. 3 (2014), p. 305

²⁶⁹ Kawalski, *ibidem*, p. 305

because the former had been able to create a situation that influenced the former,²⁷⁰ for Kawalski the effects of normative power are more tangible than the ones of the soft power because they are wider.²⁷¹ I think that a normative power application separated from soft power is poor and lacking the ideological strength that characterizes it: normative power is the transformation in recognized norms of ideas that are shared by a group of states. To affirm that the two are separated means to deny the attraction of the intangible capabilities that Nye affirmed to be the new tools in International Relations.

The concept of smart power is a synthesis of hard power and soft power. Nye himself discussed the relations between the three concepts in his book “Leadership and Power” published in 2008. Nye defines smart power as a simple combination of hard and soft power that in some cases strengthens each other because they both aim at one goal after a competition, and they both have to be used when a politician is in search of leadership.²⁷²

So when a leader is willing to reach a position of leadership through smart power, he must apply at the time policies that belong to a type or the other. Other scholars have studied smart power. In the case of Wilson, he added that smart power is not only the capacity to use instruments from soft and hard power, but also to know the limits of each instrument in order to alternate them.²⁷³ If a government was to apply smart power to his foreign policy, that would mean to reform many institutional frameworks.²⁷⁴ If we consider this application, then smart power looks like normative power. The relationship between the two types of power was also analyzed by Gallaroti, who defined smart power one corollary of soft power.²⁷⁵ Gallaroti sustained that the relation between soft and hard power is more complicated than how Nye describes it: they reinforce each other in some cases, but

²⁷⁰ Nye, ‘Soft power’, p. 168

²⁷¹ Kawalski, *ibidem*, p. 305

²⁷² Nye, *Leadership e potere*, p. 51

²⁷³ Wilson, *ibidem*, p. 116

²⁷⁴ Wilson, *ibidem*, p. 116

²⁷⁵ G. M. Gallaroti, ‘Smart Power: Definitions, Importance, and Effectiveness’, *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 38, N. 3 (2015), p. 245

essentially they are not perfect complement, making the demarcation deeper and sharper.²⁷⁶ The basis of this affirmation is that there is no distinction between soft capabilities and hard capabilities: what in the scholarship has considered hard -like military power- can be used to generate soft power and vice versa.²⁷⁷ Gallaroti sustained that the application of smart power depends on the context and the consequences that it may have in it, and the policymakers have to look for net power rather than nominal power.²⁷⁸ Gallaroti also sustained that the effects of smart power are necessarily indirect and work in the long term.²⁷⁹

All the approaches that I have analyzed so far can be summed into two theoretical frameworks: realism and neo-Liberalism. There is another theoretical framework that has studied the idea of power in the last decades: the constructivist approach. The constructivist approach has studied power starting from the question “what does power do?” and not “what power is?”,²⁸⁰ and tend to understand power like a concept both agential and intersubjective.²⁸¹ In the last years, the most prominent definition of power from a constructivist approach has been given by Guzzini. According to him, the concept of power is a dyad between two concepts: governance and power, that must be analyzed together.²⁸² The former is defined “the capacity of intersubjective practices to effects” while the latter the “capacity” of transforming resources, which affects social relationships”.²⁸³ Governance and power act in the framework of social interactions in which one agent can be privileged by the setting of an agenda shaped by the bargaining of the structure represented by the governance.²⁸⁴ The outcome of these

²⁷⁶ Gallaroti, *ibidem*, p. 250

²⁷⁷ Gallaroti, *ibidem*, p. 254

²⁷⁸ Gallaroti, *ibidem*, p. 275

²⁷⁹ Gallaroti, *ibidem*, p. 273

²⁸⁰ S. Guzzini, ‘The Concept of Power: A Constructivist Analysis’, Journal of International Studies, Vol. 33, N. 3 (2005) p. 496

²⁸¹ Guzzini, ‘The Concept of Power: A Constructivist Analysis’, p. 496

²⁸² S. Guzzini, ‘Structural power: the limits of neorealist power analysis’, International Organization, Vol. 47, N. 3, p. 467

²⁸³ Guzzini, ‘Structural power: the limits of neorealist power analysis’, p. 471

²⁸⁴ Guzzini, ‘Structural power: the limits of neorealist power analysis’, p. 474

interactions shapes both power and governance because create the identities, the preferences, and the basic action of power and the intersubjectivity of governance.²⁸⁵

Operationalization

As we saw, conceptualizing power is not easy because many aspects must be considered. The definition I want to give is power as the relationship in which one agent (state) tries to increase the control over the vital economic resources belonging to another agent (state). This definition is shaped by the idea of power by Krasner, who inside the neo-realist approach takes specifically economic resources in the definition of power. So, my definition inserts in the theoretical framework I that moment in which the evolution of the idea of power is starting to consider other kinds of resources different from the classical ones. It cannot be considered neo-Liberal as the definition of Soft Power given by Nye, but it already considers economics and trade as a major element for the relation between two countries. In my case study, Kazakhstan and China have interests in trading crude oil because is a win-win situation for both of them, and in this way they have established strong political and economic links. But all the activities in the Kazakh oil sector by Chinese companies clearly have the goal to make them at least as important as Kazakh firms changing the perspective of the Kazakh side. This element -the relationship between the agents- is the *leit motive* of all the definitions analyzed above: the interaction between two -or more in the case of the systemic frameworks- agents is the pillar of the concept.

The second element is the control. The term “control” means that the actor that possesses the natural resource, still has a good margin for the management of the resource. My point is that the term control is different from the idea of power as “power over”. If I considered power from this perspective, the relationship would be one in which the natural resources would pass from one

²⁸⁵ Guzzini, ‘Structural power: the limits of neorealist power analysis’, p. 474

ownership to another. But in the oil sector, this is basically impossible: if a natural resource passes from a state to another, that would be only the consequence of a conflict of a major political event like an international treaty or a war. The sovereignty of a state is the starting point of any extraction contract. In my case “control over” is more similar to the perspective of “power to”.

If power as “dominance” is to be considered just like power as “ownership”, power as control is on a lower level with respect to it. In the former case, the state that owns the resource can do whatever it wants with the resources: it can decide how to distribute it and how to distribute the political and economic outcomes. In the latter case, the country that owns the resources can still decide where to allocate and where to distribute the resources and the outcomes of the production, but it has to consider the presence of the country that participates in the production with important assets, like shares of projects or exploration activities; the producing country in this case has not ceded the ownership of the resources. The reason why I define power as control and not influence is that the term influence does not imply that there is interdependence or asymmetry between the two states. Asymmetry and interdependence are present in the idea of “control over” because the two states meet in order to cover a lack and because they need each other.

The third element is the idea of “vital economic resources” which are those resources a country relies on in its economic system. They can be both imported and exported resources. In the case of Kazakhstan, the crude oil is to be considered the vital economic resource because it represents more than half of the annual revenues coming from the export sector, a portion that grows if we add the revenues from the refined oil export. In the case of China, crude oil is also a vital economic resource because it represents the second most imported good in terms of annual revenues. My consideration for economic resources is linked to the importance of the economic resources in shaping the power relations between countries. interdependence, asymmetry, and control are linked to the assumption that the main instruments of power are not only the military capabilities, geography, or population, but also the natural resources, the distribution of them, and trade.

The Multi-vector Policy

The third variable is the “multi-vector policy”, a concept that has been widely analyzed and applied to the Central Asia states since their independence. This concept regards the activities in the foreign policy of countries surrounded by stronger power through diversified channels to have good relations with countries belonging to different frameworks. It is not surprising that the Central Asian countries represent a good case study for the analysis of this concept. Central Asian states are located in a zone that is a bridge between Europe and Asia and superpowers like China and Russia are strongly interested in these bordering countries. The first author who was tried to define this concept was Brzezinski, who in his book ‘The Premature Partnership’ called the diversification of the foreign policy “geopolitical pluralism”.²⁸⁶ The problem with Brzezinski is that in every book the main topic is the fight between empires, maybe as a consequence of the years spent as National Security Advisor during the Jimmy Carter presidency (1977-1980). So this concept is mainly focused on how to prevent the rebuilding of the Russian Empire in Central Asia.²⁸⁷ This concept is empire-centered and does not take into account the Central Asian state’s perspective.

The turning point in the evolution of this concept was the Crimean Crisis in 2014 which showed hoe Nur-Sultan could not be politically connected to only one superpower because the consequences could have been negative for the economy and the political stability of the ruling elite. It became clear that Kazakhstan needed to apply a stronger diversified approach to foreign policy. Hanks defined multi-vector policy as a policy based on pragmatism and non-ideological foundations that does not take into account the internal regimes of the countries partner.²⁸⁸ For the author, this was the only foreign policy that followed by Nazarbayev during his presidency,²⁸⁹ while the last literature has argued that the Kazakh foreign policy during the first 30 years of independence was

²⁸⁶ Brzezinski quoted in K. Kurylev, D. Degtarev, N. Smolik, and D. Stanis, ‘A Quantitative Analysis of Geopolitical Pluralism in the Post-Soviet Space’, International Organizations Research Journal, Vol. 13, N. 1, p. 135

²⁸⁷ Kurylev et al, *ibidem*, p. 135

²⁸⁸ R. R. Hanks, ‘Multi-vector politics’ and Kazakhstan emerging role as a geo-strategic player in Central Asia’, Journal of Balkans and Near Eastern Studies, Vol. 11, N. 3 (2009), p. 259

²⁸⁹ Hanks, *ibidem*, p. 257

moved by the Eurasian integration.²⁹⁰ The difference between these two analyses is that the former approach is wider than the latter because it considers as partners also countries outside the post-Soviet and Asian frameworks. Some other authors have discussed this concept in the Eurasian framework in a sort of New Great Game, like Omelicheva and Du who defined multi-vector policy a pragmatic strategy to overcome the status of minor power that rejects permanent alliances in order to increase the bargaining power.²⁹¹ All these definitions share some aspects but they never give a deep explanation of the concept and their possible consequences: they never explain which form this policy take.

The most complete definition of multi-vector policy was given by Contessi. Contessi does not move away from the Central Asian context for the conceptualization, but he does consider both the point of view of the single states and the point of view of the entire system. He also uses the terms multi-vector 'policy' and multi-vector 'diplomacy' interchangeably. That emphasizes how the concept, even if shaped on the experience of Central Asian politics, can be applied also in other international political frameworks. Contessi presents some variants of multi-vector policy concept as synthesis of the type of policy and the level it works -state level or system level.²⁹² The types are: mitigate exclusive dependence; marshal alternative sources of legitimation; mitigate one power's ability to dictate the condition of exports; socio-economic development.²⁹³ These types combined with the levels create the 8 variants: great power overlay; autonomy and sovereignty; international norms; regime survival; great power dependence; natural resources export development; externally sponsored corridors; global economic and infrastructure integration. This taxonomy passes the usual characters that are considered in the conceptualization: the geopolitical position of a country and

²⁹⁰ L. Anceschi, Analysing Kazakhstan's Foreign Policy-Regime neo-Eurasianism in the Nazarbaev era , (London: Routledge, 2020)

²⁹¹ M. Y. Omelicheva and R. Du, 'Kazakhstan's Multi-Vectorism and Sino-Russian Relations', Insight Turkey, Vol. 20, N. 4 (2018), p. 100

²⁹² N. P. Contessi, 'Foreign and Security Policy Diversification in Eurasia: Issue Splitting, Co-alignment, and Relational Power', Problems of Post-Communism, Vol. 62, N. 5 (2015), p. 302

²⁹³ Contessi, 'Foreign and Security Policy Diversification in Eurasia', table 1 p. 302

economic development. These are usually considered to be more linked to a classical Realist vision of international relations in which countries have only two options: fighting the superpowers or bandwagoning. With this new approach of the concept, the countries that apply this policy have more options and more freedom to choose the steps at every new event. In particular for my case study, the concept is best represented by the variant about the development of the export.

Chapter 3

Analysis

Over the period from 2014 and 2018, Kazakhstan was among the top 16 exporting countries in the world for the value of exportation in the crude oil sector. Its percentage on the world total export oscillated between 3.0% of 2016 and 3.9% of 2018.²⁹⁴ In this period, the annual revenue coming from the export of crude oil fluctuated from the 56,627 million dollars in 2014,²⁹⁵ to the 37,803 million in 2018.²⁹⁶ This variation is important because in these 5 years the export of crude oil represented more than half of the total export of Kazakhstan, allowing the country to maintain a positive trade balance all over this period. In 2014, crude oil represented about 67.49% of the total export value.²⁹⁷ Over the period I analyze, this percentage represents the highest value of oil export for Kazakhstan, a level not reached in the following years. In 2015 the value of the export dropped down by 10 points – to 58.26%-.²⁹⁸ That was the first of a two years-fall: also in 2016, the value of crude oil was 52.69% of the entire export. That year represented a negative peak for Kazakh oil export and the economy. The value of crude export for the years 2017 and 2018 went through a growth typical of economic phenomena after a sudden fall: the export of crude oil in 2016 bounced up to the

²⁹⁴ United Nations-Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2014 International Trade Statistics Yearbook-Vol. II, Trade by Product, (New York: United Nations, 2015), p. 225, table 2 and table 3; United Nations-Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2015 International Trade Statistics Yearbook-Vol. II, Trade by Product, (New York: United Nations, 2016), p. 235, table 2 and table 3; United Nations-Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2016 International Trade Statistics Yearbook-Vol. II, Trade by Product, (New York: United Nations, 2017), p. 236, table 2 and table 3; United Nations-Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2017 International Trade Statistics Yearbook-Vol. II, Trade by Product, (New York: United Nations, 2019), p. 97, table 2 and table 3; United Nations-Department of Economic and Social Affairs, '2018 International Trade Statistics Yearbook-Vol. II, Trade by Product', (New York: United Nations, 2019), p. 97, table 2 and table 3

²⁹⁵ United Nations-Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2014 International Trade Statistics Yearbook-Vol. I, Trade by Country, (New York: United Nations, 2015), p. 212

²⁹⁶ United Nations-Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2018 International Trade Statistics Yearbook-Vol. I, Trade by Country, (New York: United Nations, 2017), p. 212

²⁹⁷ United Nations-Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2014 International Trade Statistics Yearbook-Vol. I, Trade by Country, (New York: United Nations, 2015), p. 212

²⁹⁸ United Nations-Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2016 International Trade Statistics Yearbook-Vol. I, Trade by Country, (New York: United Nations, 2017), p. 220

54.99% on the total and up to 62.01% in 2018.²⁹⁹ This growth allowed Kazakhstan to reach a good level of crude oil export, but not as good as in 2014.

The oscillation in the percentage in the value of the export is reflected in the actual quantity of oil exported. In 2014, Nur-Sultan exported 68 million tons of crude,³⁰⁰ this quantity decreased in 2015 and 2016 -respectively down to 63 million tons and 62 million tons.³⁰¹ The amount of crude exported grew in 2017 and again in 2018: the quantity of crude oil exported grew up to 68 million tons during the first year and 69 million tons in the latter.³⁰² If we analyze these changes in percentage we notice that in 2018 the total revenues were still 70,48% of the revenues of 2014, despite an annual growth of 42,17%.³⁰³ So, the country, and its economy, was still recovering from the two-years crisis. Despite this volatility in the export of oil, Kazakhstan always remained a country with an extremely high level of revenues coming from the oil sector -more than 50% of the good on the total export. Only in 2016, the reduction was so critical from the average that it might have reduced the security of supply from the extremely high level to the high level -between 35% and 50% on the total export-

In the same period, crude oil represented the second good most imported by China. In 2014 it was ranked first, but it dropped after China increased the import of electronic circuits.³⁰⁴ Even in the case of China, there is a drop in the value of crude oil imported in 2015 and in 2016, just like in the value of revenues coming from the export of oil for Kazakhstan. In 2014, the value of the import of oil was 228,288 million dollars and the percentage was 11.66% of the total import sector.³⁰⁵ The value

²⁹⁹ United Nations-Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2018 International Trade Statistics Yearbook-Vol. I, Trade by Country, (New York: United Nations, 2019), p. 190

³⁰⁰ UN Comtrade Database, <https://comtrade.un.org/data/>, consulted on 22/06/2020

³⁰¹ UN Comtrade Database, <https://comtrade.un.org/data/>, consulted on 22/06/2020

³⁰² UN Comtrade Database, <https://comtrade.un.org/data/>, consulted on 22/06/2020

³⁰³ United Nations-Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2018 International Trade Statistics Yearbook-Vol. II, Trade by Product, (New York: United Nations, 2019), p. 95

³⁰⁴ United Nations-Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2014 International Trade Statistics Yearbook -Vol. I Trade by Country, (New York: United Nations, 2015), p. 127

³⁰⁵ United Nations-Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2014 International Trade Statistics Yearbook -Vol. I Trade by Country, (New York: United Nations, 2015), p. 127

decreased in 2015 down to 134,342 million dollars³⁰⁶ to 116,660 million dollars in 2016³⁰⁷ counting respectively 8.00% and the 7.35% of the total value of the import. The value increased in 2017 and 2018 when crude oil counted 8.88% and 11.02% of the total import, while the total amount was 162,820 million dollars in the first year and 239,222 million dollars in the second.³⁰⁸ What we notice here is that there is a parallelism between Kazakhstan and China: both the countries experienced a drop in the value of their oil flows in the years 2015 and 2016. This is due to the fluctuation of crude oil prices. In those years, the oil price touched the lowest points of the decade, reaching 46.79 d/bs in January 2015 and 27.79 d/bs in January 2016 on the Brent index.³⁰⁹ In 2014 the price per unit of crude oil -expresses in kgs- paid by China was 0.7 dollars per unit, the following year was 0.4 dollars.³¹⁰ The prices were low also in 2016 -0.3 dollars- and 2017 -0.4 dollars-.³¹¹ In 2018 the price grew a bit until reaching 0.5 dollars per unit. China took advantage of this situation: the quantity of oil imported in the years between 2015 and 2018 had an annual growth of 10.66% and if we take into account the general growth, the quantity exported in 2018 was 49.79% higher of the quantity of 2014. All these quantities were imported with a reduction of expenditure. So China took advantage of this situation, which was so favorable that the expenditures in 2018 grew by 4.79% if compared to 2014, but the quantity imported increased by 49.79. We can assume that in the years analyzed China enjoy the crisis of the oil price while Kazakhstan did not because saw a huge portion of its export and economy undermined by the strong fluctuation.

³⁰⁶ United Nations-Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2017 International Trade Statistics Yearbook -Vol. I Trade by Country, (New York: United Nations, 2018), p. 122

³⁰⁷ United Nations-Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2017 International Trade Statistics Yearbook -Vol. I Trade by Country, (New York: United Nations, 2018), p. 122

³⁰⁸ United Nations-Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2017 International Trade Statistics Yearbook -Vol. I Trade by Country, (New York: United Nations, 2018), p. 122

³⁰⁹ Il Sole24Ore, https://mercati.ilsole24ore.com/materie-primarie/commodities/petrolio/BRNST.IPE?refresh_ce consulted on 20/06/2020. Those two peaks were the lowest reached in the history of the crude oil prices until March 2020, when the prices reached the negative price of -37 d/bs.

³¹⁰ United Nations-Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2015 International Trade Statistics Yearbook -Vol. I Trade by Country, (New York: United Nations, 2016), p. 129

³¹¹ United Nations-Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2018 International Trade Statistics Yearbook -Vol. I Trade by Country (New York: United Nations, 2019), p. 123

In analyzing we actual flows of export of Kazakhstan and import of China and the effects of their relation, we must remember the bilateral asymmetry in the data provided to the UN, that is a statistical gap between the data provided by Kazakh and Chinese governments regarding the flow in their countries. I decided to maintain this gap in the calculations of import and export of the countries in order to reflect their points of view and to get one of the main points of the theoretical background: that in an asymmetric relationship, the relationship itself is shaped by the respect of the points of view of each state.

The Kazakh export in the years 2014-2018³¹²

In 2014, the top destinations of the Kazakh oil export were: Italy; the Netherlands; China; France; Switzerland; Romania; Austria; Spain; Greece; Israel; Turkey and India, that together accounted the 90% of the total export. At that time the China was third destination for Kazakhstan: the quantity of crude oil reaching Beijing was 6.269 million tons, worth 4,879 million dollars and 9.10% on the total export.³¹³ The main partner was Italy, that alone counted almost one-third of the total oil export. European countries were the main destinations of the export followed by Asian countries.

The first sign of change in this picture started in 2015. In that year, there was a change in the top three destinations. Italy was still the first destination of the export -the quantity exported and the revenues still accounted one-third of the total- but the share of export destined to the Netherlands increased by two points -from 11.97% to 13.95%-. France became the third destination, accounting 9% of the total. But the main variation concerned the Asian destination. The export to China fell as the country was passed by Switzerland. Kazakh export to China reduced by more than one million tons, from 6.269 million tons to 5.097 million. The revenues, also considering the fall of the oil price,

³¹² For the graphs about this section see appendix n.1

³¹³ UN Comtrade Database, <https://comtrade.un.org/data/>, consulted on 23/06/2020

reduced passing from 4,879 million dollars to 2, million dollars, representing 7.6% of the total. One country that became more important for the Kazakh export was South Korea. In 2015 South Korea was the second Asian destination for the Kazakh oil and the ninth overall representing 2.5% of the total export. On an annual basis, the percentage of export to Seoul doubled because in 2014 it was only 1.4% of the total.³¹⁴ The flow of crude oil from Kazakhstan to the East Asian country grew by 60.4%. This growth is to be considered with the parallel reduction of the export to China and the reduction of the export to India, which in 2014 accounted 1.88% of the export and in 2015 only 0.65%.

In 2016, the export from Kazakhstan saw a strengthening of the flow to the European destinations with respect to the Asian ones. The export to Italy grew by 3 million tons and it accounted for more than 37% on the total.³¹⁵ This trend is confirmed by the fact that the first top-five destinations were all European, and in two cases the importing country saw an annual increase. These countries are Switzerland and Spain. The former was the third top destination and the latter the fifth. In that period the export to China was still reducing. The flow to the bordering country accounted for only 4.5%, a sensitive reduction from 7.6% of the previous years. The revenues were only 876 million dollars, 4,000 million less if compared to the flow in 2014. From that year on, China as Asian destination started becoming a secondary choice for Kazakhstan.

The trend of the oil flow between Kazakhstan and China became clearer in 2017. South Korea became the first Asian destination in 2015, in which the country exported 2.375 million tons for 955 million dollars, and despite a reduction in the export to Seoul in 2016, the level of revenues was higher than the level of 2014. The reduction of the importance of China as a destination is confirmed by the growth of flow to two other countries geopolitically rivals of China: India and Japan. The revenues coming from New Delhi accounted for the 2.33% of the total revenues of Kazakhstan that

³¹⁴ UN Comtrade Database, <https://comtrade.un.org/data/>, consulted on 23/06/2020

³¹⁵ UN Comtrade Database, <https://comtrade.un.org/data/>, consulted on 23/06/2020

year and the revenues coming from Tokyo accounted for the 1.28% and in both cases the increase experienced was the confirmation of a trend started in 2015. The only difference is that for India the process was gradual -the percentage of export in 2015 was 0.65 and in 2016 was 0.94-, while for Japan the export saw a slight reduction in 2016 -it was 1.09% from the 1.31% of 2015-. Furthermore, India entered among the top destinations of the Kazakh oil export, becoming the third Asian destination. Among the European destinations, that still were the most important for the Kazakh export, the revenues from Spain increased, reaching the highest level in the years analyzed -5.19%- and making the country the fifth destination right after Switzerland for 2017.

In 2018 there was the definitive dip of the oil export to China, despite the reinforcement of the Asian destinations against the European destinations. The first Asian destination for the oil export was South Korea, second Japan, and then China and India. South Korea represented 7.45% of the total export of Kazakhstan and it was overall the fifth destination.³¹⁶ Japan and India represented together almost 5% of the total export. The portion of China on the total export shrank down to 2.19%.³¹⁷ Compared with the crude oil export to China in 2014, there had been a reduction of almost 7 points in terms of revenues. On the quantity side, in 2018 were exported 5 million tons less than in 2014. The revenues coming from Japan and India were respectively 2.44% and 1.96% of the total. The diversification of the destinations was a feature also shared in the export to Europe. Alongside with the export to Western European countries already mentioned, that were still representing the top destinations of the flow, Kazakhstan started to export also to new Eastern European partners like, Poland and Lithuania that represented respectively 1.81% and 1.63% of the total. Curiously, in Europe there was a case similar to the Chinese one: Romania. In 2014 it was among the top European destination with 5.71% of the Kazakh export. This portion reduced and in 2018 it was 3.87%, being

³¹⁶ UN Comtrade Database, <https://comtrade.un.org/data/>, consulted on 06/25/2020

³¹⁷ UN Comtrade Database, <https://comtrade.un.org/data/> consulted on 06/22/2020

passed by other European countries already mentioned -Spain and Switzerland- and in Asia by South Korea.

*The Chinese import in the years 2014-2018*³¹⁸

In 2014, the 90% of the crude oil import to China were from the following countries: Saudi Arabia; Angola; Russia; Oman; Iran; Iraq; United Arab Emirates (UAE); Venezuela; Kuwait Colombia; Congo; Brazil; South Sudan and Kazakhstan.³¹⁹ Thanks to the import from these 14 states, China in that year had a high level of security demand because it had a high differentiated import if compared to the average number of suppliers for importing countries – either 9 or 10 countries usually-. In that year, Beijing could account for the oil imported from four different continents: Europe, Asia, Africa, and South America. That made the demand of China safe from political or economic events that might block the flow of crude oil from one of the contexts. Among these states, the portion from Kazakhstan was 5.686 million tons out of 308.374 million tons, representing 1.8% of the total import and ranking Nur-Sultan after Congo, Brazil, and South Sudan.³²⁰ Kazakhstan and Russia were the only two bordering countries that were exporting oil to China, but the latter was on the top three. I want to emphasize an aspect that gives us the sense of the differentiation of the Chinese oil import: the top three importing countries belong to three different geopolitical and international contexts: Middle East -Saudi Arabia-, Atlantic Africa -Angola-, and Eurasian macro-continent -Russia-.

In 2015 the situation remained the same. The 14 countries listed above still represented 90% of the total oil imported for China, even if there were some changes in the ranking. Russia passed Angola as second most important importer for China, even if the African country remained in the top

³¹⁸ See appendix n.2 for the graphs about this section

³¹⁹ UN Comtrade Database, <https://comtrade.un.org/data/> consulted on 06/21/2020

³²⁰ UN Comtrade Database, <https://comtrade.un.org/data/>, consulted on 06/21/2020

three. One country that saw its portion -and importance- increased was Brazil, which reinforced its role as second South American supplier of China by doubling the percentage on the total: in 2014 China imported 2.3% of its oil from Brazil while in 2015 was 4.2%. In terms of tons, in 2014 the amount was 7.024 million tons and in 2015 was 13.918 million tons.³²¹ Since 2015, Brazil has been the first South American partner -passing an OPEC country that traditionally had a strong partnership with China: Venezuela³²²- in the import of oil because in the following years the portion continued to increase to 6.9% of the total on the Chinese import in 2018. Kazakhstan in 2015 saw its portion restricted: the portion coming from Kazakhstan restricted by 0.4% down to 1.5% reducing the relative importance of Nur-Sultan in the choices of Beijing.

In 2016, there were some important changes in the framework of the Chinese import. The countries that gained more importance in this ranking were the United Kingdom and Vietnam. This change is paramount for Chinese import. It means that Europe increased its weight because the UK was the second European importer for Beijing after Russia, the portion of the UK in the amount imported that year represented 1.3% of the total. This portion was still distant from the amount of crude oil that China imported from Russia -that in 2016 was the first partner of China in term of oil import, passing Saudi Arabia- but gives us the idea of how the strategies followed by the Chinese government did not exclude any country or were just reserved to second-category economic powers. The second important aspect is that the presence of Vietnam among the top importing countries means new attention to the South East Asian context. Vietnam exported in 2016 almost the same quantity of oil as the UK: 4.954 million tons The European country and 4.265 the South-Eastern country.³²³ As the importance of the UK and Vietnam increased, the quantity of oil coming from Kazakhstan

³²¹ UN Comtrade Database, <https://comtrade.un.org/data/>, consulted on 06/22/2020

³²² [Limesonline](https://www.limesonline.com/rubrica/per-il-petrolio-e-contro-gli-usa-la-cina-finanzia-il-venezuela-xi-jinping-maduro) 'Per il petrolio e contro gli Usa, la Cina finanzia il Venezuela', (20/09/2018), <https://www.limesonline.com/rubrica/per-il-petrolio-e-contro-gli-usa-la-cina-finanzia-il-venezuela-xi-jinping-maduro>, consulted on 28/06/2020; [AGI](https://www.agi.it/estero/cina_venezuela_maduro_xi_jinping-2013200/news/2017-08-03/), A. Spaletta, 'Nella crisi venezuelana la Cina si Schiera con Maduro', (08/04/2020), https://www.agi.it/estero/cina_venezuela_maduro_xi_jinping-2013200/news/2017-08-03/, consulted on 06/25/2020; H.K. Sonneland, 'Explainer: Venezuela's Oil and Military Ties with China and Russia', (02/15/2017), <https://www.as-coa.org/articles/explainer-venezuelas-oil-and-military-ties-china-and-russia>, consulted 06/25/2020

³²³ UN Comtrade Database, <https://comtrade.un.org/data/>, consulted on 06/22/2020

decreased. In 2016 China imported just 2.502 million tons from Kazakhstan, which counted for 0.85% of the total.

In 2017, the Chinese import showed the consolidation of two important aspects: the quote of import from South East Asia and the presence of the United States as a major exporter for the Chinese market. As a matter of fact, Malaysia became on the most important exporters by sending to China 6.587 million tons of oil crude, which represented 1.5% of the total.³²⁴ These numbers may appear insignificant but are actually crucial if compared with the numbers of the oil imported from Kazakhstan. The flow from the Central Asian country reduced further, and in that year it represented only 0.6% on the total crude imported by China. Kazakhstan has turned into a secondary, if not tertiary, option for the Chinese oil needs, despite its closeness. On the contrary, the USA grew in importance because the import of oil to China had begun to increase sensitively until reaching almost 2% on the total.³²⁵ The main point is that in 2014 the import of oil from the USA was basically nonexistent, and it had exponential growth in those years. In 2017, China imported 7.580 million tons from the US, a significant growth if compared with the 485,433 tons that were imported in 2016.³²⁶

The role if the US in the crude Chinese import strengthened the following year. In 2018 the import almost doubled to more than 12.281 million tons, and as a consequence the import reached 2.6% of the total import for 2018. In this way, the US became the first “western” source of crude oil for China. The import from Kazakhstan in that year reduced down to 0.5% of the total and the quantity of oil imported was 2.287 million tons.³²⁷ If we compared the quantity exported in that year with the quantity imported in 2014 you notice a reduction of the 60%, as a consequence the portion that Kazakhstan represented in the Chinese oil import in 2014, has been taken by other countries of different continents, like UK, USA, Brazil and lately Malaysia, which have represented the novelty

³²⁴ UN Comtrade Database, <https://comtrade.un.org/data/>, consulted on 06/22/2020

³²⁵ UN Comtrade Database, <https://comtrade.un.org/data/>, consulted on 06/22/2020

³²⁶ UN Comtrade Database, <https://comtrade.un.org/data/>, consulted on 06/22/2020

³²⁷ UN Comtrade Database, <https://comtrade.un.org/data/>, consulted on 06/22/2020

in an import dominated by Russia, Middle East countries and African countries. For these reasons, the level of diversification of China in its crude import has always been high in the last six years.

Kazakhstan and China, never been further?

What we see in the comparison between the import to China and the Kazakh export of oil in the period 2014-2018 is that the flow between the two countries reduced sensitively. This reduction sustains my hypothesis -an importing country will meet resistance from the exporting country and will not be able to increase its power over it. By power, I meant a situation in which an importing country imposes itself as the main destination of a natural resource -in my case oil- produced in a different country which bases its economy over the production and the export of the natural resource. By giving a numerical measure, I would say that when a country exports 40% of its crude oil to only one destination, the importing country is a condition of power with respect to the exporter. This situation implies that the relationship is oriented toward a stronger position of the importer over the exporter, because for the supplier country the relationship represents the only source of revenues for the trade balance and in case of sudden crisis in the importing country the national economy of the supplier would collapse. In this case, we can talk about power as “ownership” because the importer country is in a situation in which the resource is in its availability even if nominally belonging to the exporter. When the exporter country sends a portion between 20% and 40% to just one importer, the level of power can be defined as “control”, because a sudden reduction of demand by the importer could create a crisis in the trade balance of the exporter and reduces the revenues. When the level of export to one country is lower than the 20%, the importer has “influence” over the flow of the supplier, but the supplier can still count on the revenues from other destinations without having the trade balance and the amount of revenues totally damaged.

Table n.2: Power Indicators of the importing country

Level of Power	Percentage of oil produced in one country exported abroad to one destination
Ownership	> 40%
Control	20% – 40%
Influence	< 20%

In the case of the relationship between Kazakhstan and China, the latter started from a position of influence in the Kazakh export and we saw that the investment made by the Chinese oil companies was aiming at having a bigger role in the entire production chain. We also saw that the Kazakh government had a reaction and it started moving in the direction of buying back shares of the national oil companies and how the trade flow reduced between 2014 and 2018. To understand how crucial the oil sector for the Kazakh economy is, we must consider the GDP composition of the period we are analyzing.³²⁸ Between 2014 and 2018 the export of oil was the main contributor to the trade balance of Kazakhstan,³²⁹ and the trade balance suffered from the fall of the oil price in 2016 and 2017. The problem is that in the same period the voice “trade” in the Kazakh GDP counted on average the 16.9% of the total, resulting the second biggest sector after industry -which is composed for more than half by the extraction of minerals and oil-.³³⁰ In other words, the extraction of oil and its trade are at the basis of the Kazakh economy, which is used by the government as a pillar of its political

³²⁸ The following data refer to the years 2015, 2016, 2017, and 2018 and are taken by the webpage of the Ministry of National Economy of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

³²⁹ United Nations-Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2014 International Trade Statistics Yearbook-Vol. I, Trade by Country, (New York: United Nations, 2015), p. 212; United Nations-Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2015 International Trade Statistics Yearbook-Vol. I, Trade by Country, (New York: United Nations, 2016), p. 218; United Nations-Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2016 International Trade Statistics Yearbook-Vol. I, Trade by Country, (New York: United Nations, 2017), p. 220; United Nations-Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2014 International Trade Statistics Yearbook-Vol. I, Trade by Country, (New York: United Nations, 2015), p. 188; United Nations-Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2018 International Trade Statistics Yearbook-Vol. I, Trade by Country, (New York: United Nations, 2019), p. 190

³³⁰ Ministry of National Economy of the Republic of Kazakhstan website, ‘Express Information-Gross domestic product by the production method for 2015’, ‘Express Information-Gross domestic product by the production method for 2016’, ‘Express Information-Gross domestic product by the production method for 2017’, ‘Express Information-Gross domestic product by the production method for 2018’; <https://stat.gov.kz/official/industry/11/statistic/6>, consulted on 07/12/2020

stability. So, in case China had increased the import from Kazakhstan, and in the other way around Kazakhstan had increased the export to China, in combination with the action of the Chinese NOCs in the Kazakh oil sector, Beijing would have had the chance to increase the power over the main sectors of the Kazakh GDP and national economy. The intervening variable that stops the causal relation between energy security and power is the multi-vector policy. Both China and Kazakhstan kept a high level of energy security -from the side of supplying for Nur-Sultan and from the side of diversification for Beijing- between 2014 and 2018. At the same time Nur-Sultan in that period exported to other countries in Asia -South Korea, India, and Japan- and increased the export to Europe, making France an important partner, growing the importance of other countries -like Switzerland- and maintaining as first destination Italy as a reaction of the possible increase of power over the main economic source of the country from the bordering and powerful country. The European destinations represent a good way to guarantee a safe source of revenues for the Kazakh economy without losing control of it, as it would have been if China had increased its import. The only country that can represent a menace for Kazakhstan is Italy, but the difference between the Italian and the Chinese activity in Kazakhstan is that ENI, the Italian NOC, does not have a strategy that implies the buying of Kazakh NOCs' shares, but the collaboration with the Kazakh Government.³³¹

In the five years analyzed China maintained a stable flow with its three main suppliers -Russia, Saudi Arabia, and Angola- and increased its diversification by importing from new African countries -like Congo-, from South American countries -Brazil- or South Eastern Asia -Vietnam and Malaysia-. These zones are those that are going to be affected by the BRI according to the Chinese projects. But to explain the change in the suppliers of oil just like a strategic application of the BRI is reductive. Finally, what matters along with the reduction of percentage on the total import is the actual reduction of the quantity of oil imported. If China would have kept unchanged its import from Kazakhstan, it

³³¹ [Agi](https://www.agi.it/economia/energia/eni_esplorazione_produzione_offshore_abay_kazakhstan-5778841/news/2019-07-05/), 'Eni ottiene i diritti di esplorazione e produzione nell'area di Abay, in Kazakhstan', https://www.agi.it/economia/energia/eni_esplorazione_produzione_offshore_abay_kazakhstan-5778841/news/2019-07-05/, consulted on 07/16/2020

would have meant that its role for the Central Asian state was still a prominent one among the destinations of Kazakh crude oil. The reduction of kgs exported between 2014 and 2018 is the proof that the Kazakh implementation of the multi-vector policy wanted to give preference to new destinations and put apart China, that as a consequence started to import from new countries strategically more important.

These data also prove the theory of Womack right. To mention Womack again, in his theory the difference of perspectives of the two countries shapes the relationship in a way that actor A and actor B reinforce each other and their interests. In this situation, data show that the reduction of export to China was due to a will of Kazakhstan to supply other countries that do not represent a threat for the national economy because distant from the supplier -and as consequence less prone to intervene politically- and to make the action in its oil sector free from the interference of such important bordering country.³³² In this way, Nur-Sultan can achieve one of the pillars of Womack's theory: the maintenance of its autonomy by maintaining a high level of energy security as shown in table n.3. The problem in the relationship with China is that Beijing threatened this autonomy showing a lack of respect, that according to Womack is essential in an asymmetric relationship. Kazakhstan's reaction to the interference of China in the oil sector has made possible to maintain the autonomy, because the actions of the Chinese oil companies and the growth of the Chinese portion of import from Kazakhstan created an overcoming presence in the sector and created a problem for the first source of income for the Central Asian national economy.³³³

Womack defines the interactions of two countries as 'negotiated', and from this term, he describes the relationship considering two aspects: whether both the countries are equally exposed in the relationship, and whether they have convergent interests. In the case of Kazakhstan and China, the latter is to be considered the country A and the one with more capabilities -meant as the resource

³³² Womack, *Asymmetry and International Relationships*, p. 46

³³³ Womack, *Asymmetry and International Relationships*, p. 44

of a country to sustain its interests abroad³³⁴ and it is less exposed to the relationship. As a matter of fact China's "going out" strategy allows the country to reach different producer countries in different political frameworks. In this China has met the common Kazakhstan's interests, because both of them wanted to establish a good flow of crude oil between the two economies. The main problem is that Kazakhstan is country B in the relationship and it has more at stake, because in case a foreign country increases the control over the resource and become the external owner, it will lose the most important part of its export sector and consequently of the GDP -the oil revenues - making the national economy shrink. I classified above three levels of power: ownership, control, and influence.

The interactions between countries categorized by Womack, can be compared with the measurement of power. Ownership corresponds to domination -set between disjunctive interests and one side exposure-; control to patron-client interaction -set between one side exposure and convergent interests-; strategic partnership to influence -between convergent interests and equal exposure-; and strategic to rivalry -between equal exposure and disjunctive interests- with the lack of power relations.³³⁵ The two countries started from a situation in which the interaction was characterized by a strategic partner relationship in which but both have convergent interests -Kazakhstan to sell crude oil, China to have a source of crude oil next to its border, in this way they could keep their energy security indicators high - and ended up toward a situation in which the interaction moved toward a situation of strategic rivalry, characterized by disjunctive interests³³⁶ because the influence of the stronger side diminished until almost disappear and the weakest side was able to take its own decisions about the resources.

As I mentioned, the reduction of power -shown by the reduction of percentage exported to China in the power indicator (table n.4)- and the impossibility for an importer country to increase it over one of its suppliers was due to the change of relationship, represented in my case study by the

³³⁴ Womack, *Asymmetry and International Relationships*, p. 43

³³⁵ Womack, *Asymmetry and International Relationships*, p. 53

³³⁶ Womack, *Asymmetry and International Relationships*, p. 53-54.

multi-vector policies implemented by Nur-Sultan. According to Womack the change of structure in the relationship is due to the changes in the elements of the asymmetric relationship: capabilities, identity, diplomacy, and context.³³⁷ We already spoke about capabilities. Identity is defined by the author as “the country’s notion of self as presumed by the state’s activity” and it is formed by territory people and ideology.³³⁸ One change in one of these ‘basic’ components causes the change of the identity in the state. Diplomacy is the “interaction of the two governments”³³⁹ and is the element that takes into account the external and internal political events in its shaping. The last element, context, is the “shared international environment of the bilateral relationship”.³⁴⁰ But there is an important aspect that must be considered in the bilateral relationship: if the relationship has higher or lower frames that can make change the international position of the country. So in my case study, China is country A and Kazakhstan is country B, but if we enlarge the international environment to other countries like Kyrgyzstan, in the bilateral relationship between Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, the latter would be country B because smaller and with less capabilities. The second factor constituting the context is time, because the relationship between two countries changes over time and the position can reverse.

In my case study, there are two elements that more than the others relate to the intervening variable: capability and diplomacy. The change in capabilities means a possible control of China over the main economic resource of Kazakhstan, making one part of the GDP coming straight from a country with bigger political instruments and different goals and it would have tied the variations of trade balance and GDP to the decisions taken in a foreign country. Multi-vector policy is a variable that includes diplomacy first of all, and that is why the changes in this element of the bilateral relationship are to be connected with the variable. As we saw, this variable is a political guideline used to pursued to emphasize the autonomy and independence of countries in foreign policy and that

³³⁷ Womack, *Asymmetry and International Relationships*, p. 61

³³⁸ Womack, *Asymmetry and International Relationships*, p. 63

³³⁹ Womack, *Asymmetry and International Relationships*, p. 64

³⁴⁰ Womack, *Asymmetry and International Relationships*, p. 65

is why it has found in the Central Asian context the best actuation. Related to Womack, multi-vector policy is the way to reinforce the autonomy of country B against country A, which is brought by it to the respect toward country B. So, it is the foreign policy part of the element that characterized the intervening variable. If I had taken into account the other part of the element, the internal political issues, I would have considered identity -and in particular the single identities if all the three clans of the Kazakh population- as the prominent element in the change of the relationship. The last element listed by Womack, context, is also to be not considered as an element of change in the relationship, for a simple reason: Kazakhstan does not have inherent features to become as strong as China in the bilateral relationship in the future, and it does not have a past historical situation in which the positions of the two countries were reversed to aspire to.

Table n. 3: Levels of energy security in China and Kazakhstan between 2014 and 2018

Year	Percentage of Revenues on Kazakh Export	Value of Security of Supply	Top supplying countries for Chinese demand	Level of Security of Demand
2014	67.49%	Extremely High	14	High
2015	58.26%	Extremely High	14	High
2016	52.69%	Extremely High	15	High
2017	54.99%	Extremely High	16	High
2018	62.01%	Extremely High	15	High

Table N.4: China's levels of power over Kazakhstan

Years	Level of Export to China	Levels of Power
2014	9.10%	Influence
2015	7.65%	Influence
2016	4.52%	Influence
2017	3.21%	Influence
2018	2.19%	Influence

Conclusion

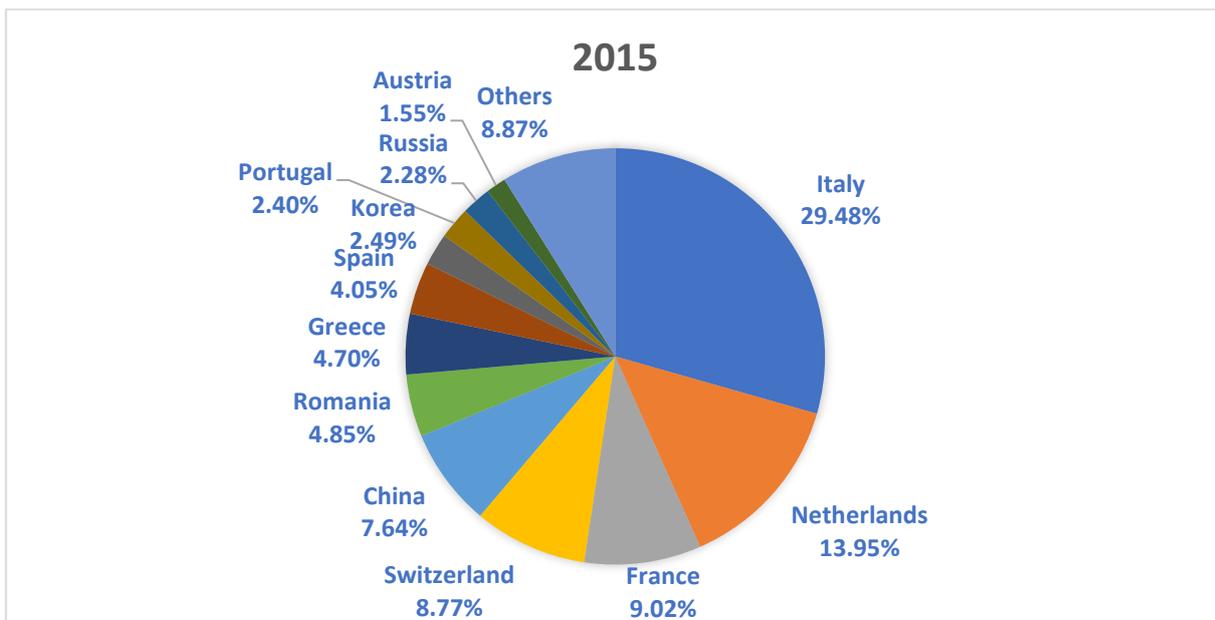
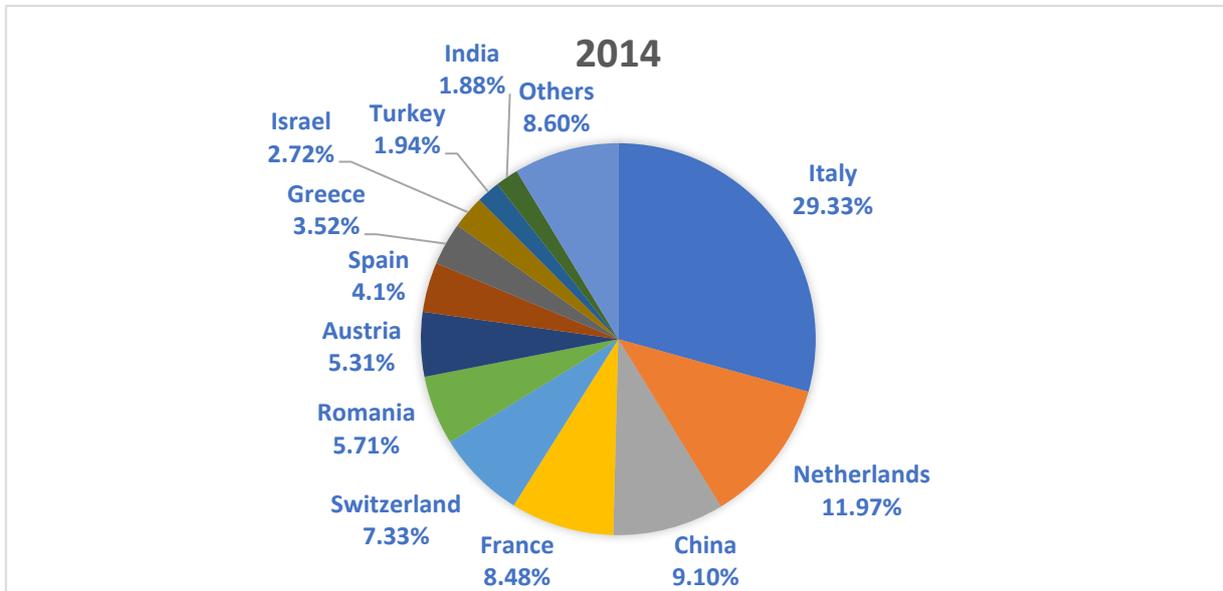
In this dissertation I have tried to draw the pattern of the relations between Kazakhstan and China in the oil sector. I have analyzed the concepts of energy security, power, and multi-vector policy, giving for each one of them a complete analysis of how they have evolved and which aspect were useful for my analysis; then from these concepts I have tried to analyze if an importing country can increase its power over the exporter country. In my analysis the theoretical background was the Asymmetry Theory of Brantly Womack -also defined by the author himself “dialectical realism”- which emphasizes how the difference in the distribution of military, political, and economic capabilities shape the relationship between two geographically close countries, with one being bigger than the other. My case study proved this hypothesis – that despite economic asymmetry, an importing country will meet resistance from a smaller exporting country and will not be able to increase its power over it - to be right and proves the Womack theory to be right too. The relations between Kazakhstan and China -two bordering countries those relationship is characterized by the economic power of China and the production of crude oil by the Central Asian country- in the oil sector -a strategic sector for both the countries in terms of export and import- were born in the 1990s and developed in the two following decades until reaching a stable flow in the 2010s, after that Chinese investment in the country became a feature for the development of the sector. But starting from 2014, the data show that the trend has changed until a sensitive reduction of the flow in 2018 making Kazakhstan one of the last suppliers to China and China one of the last buyers of oil from the Central Asia state. I explained this change in the relationship due to the fact that multi-vector policy, a kind of policy traditionally applied by Nur-Sultan in its foreign policy, intervened in the relation of power as consequence of energy security.

The reduction of the flow of crude oil between is an important setback in the relationship between the two countries, that are forced to have economic and political relations because of the

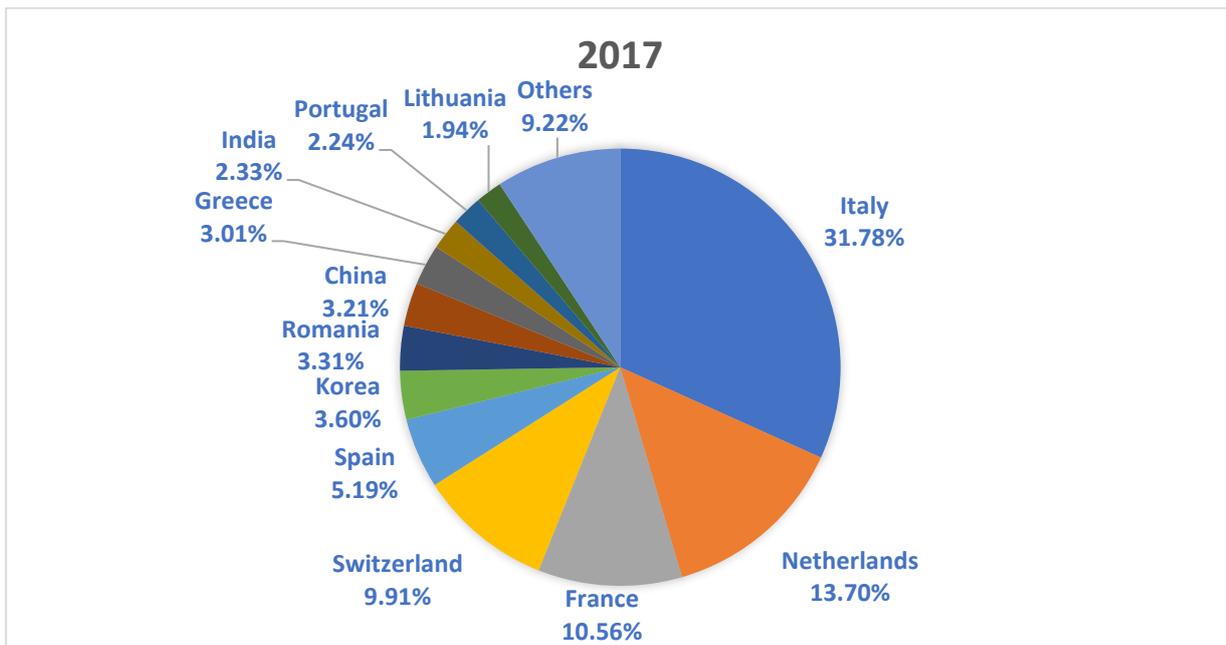
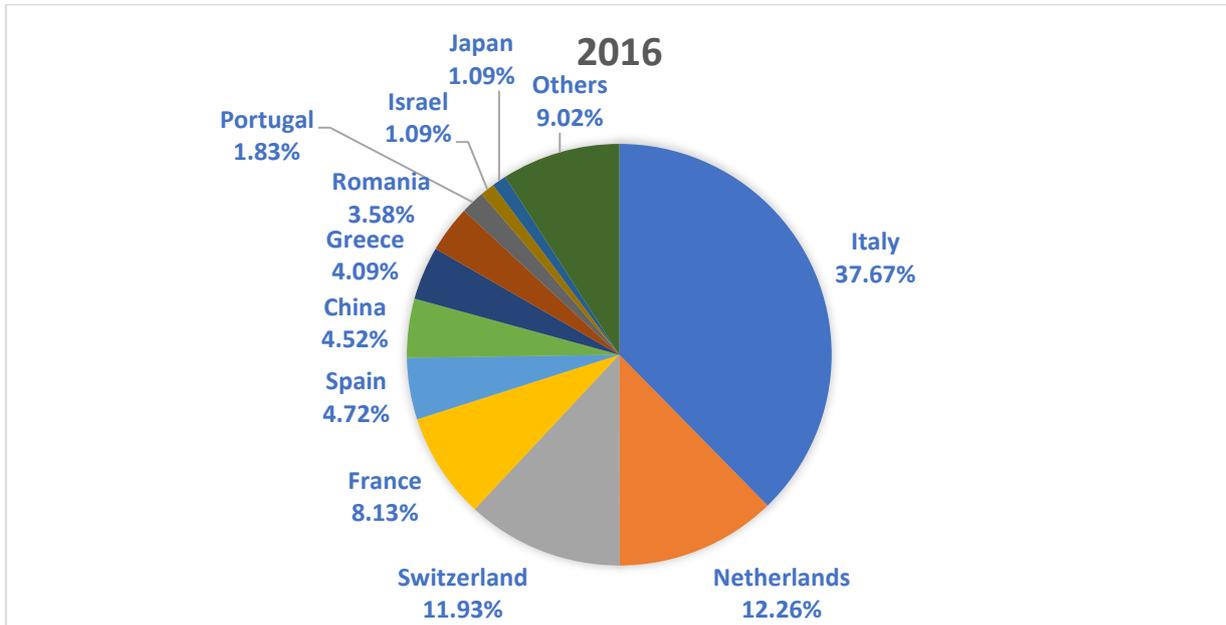
closeness. The problem is that the issues characterizing this relation are many and politically explosive. Foreign issues like the treatment of the Uighur minority in the Xinjiang autonomous region, the development of the BRI, and the Chinese threaten to the Russian influence in the region, along with internal factor like the reactions of the Kazakh population to the growing role of Chinese companies in all the local economies; the struggle for power inside the Kazakhs Government, and the effect of COVID-19 are likely to be the basis of the choice of the approach that Nur-Sultan will have with Beijing in the next years. All these factors should be analyzed in order to have a wider and more comprehensive picture of the relations between the two countries. While China does not need to figure all these problems out in the short term to maintain a satisfactory relation with Kazakhstan, Nur-Sultan will need to solve some of them -especially those internal- in order to maintain a stable position with Beijing and no to became a prey of both the economic and political activities of China and the counter-reactions of other international great powers.

Appendix N.1

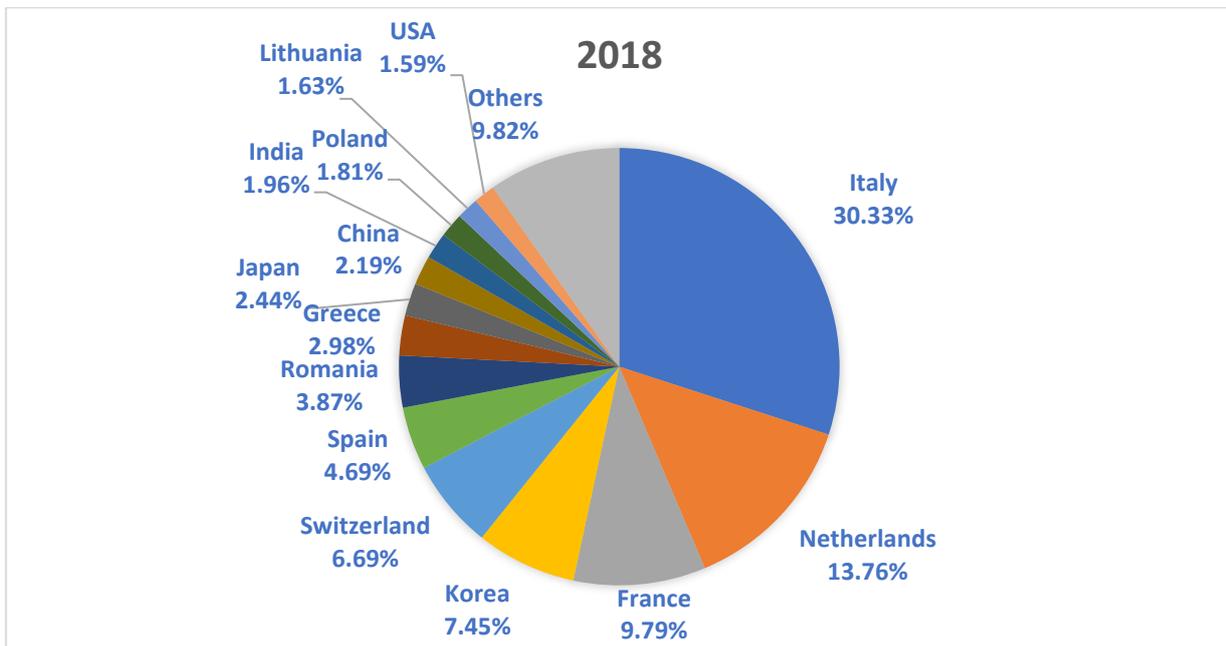
Top destinations of Kazakh crude oil export 2014-2018 according their value in million dollars. These and the following graphs are elaborated from the data available on the UN Comtrade website.



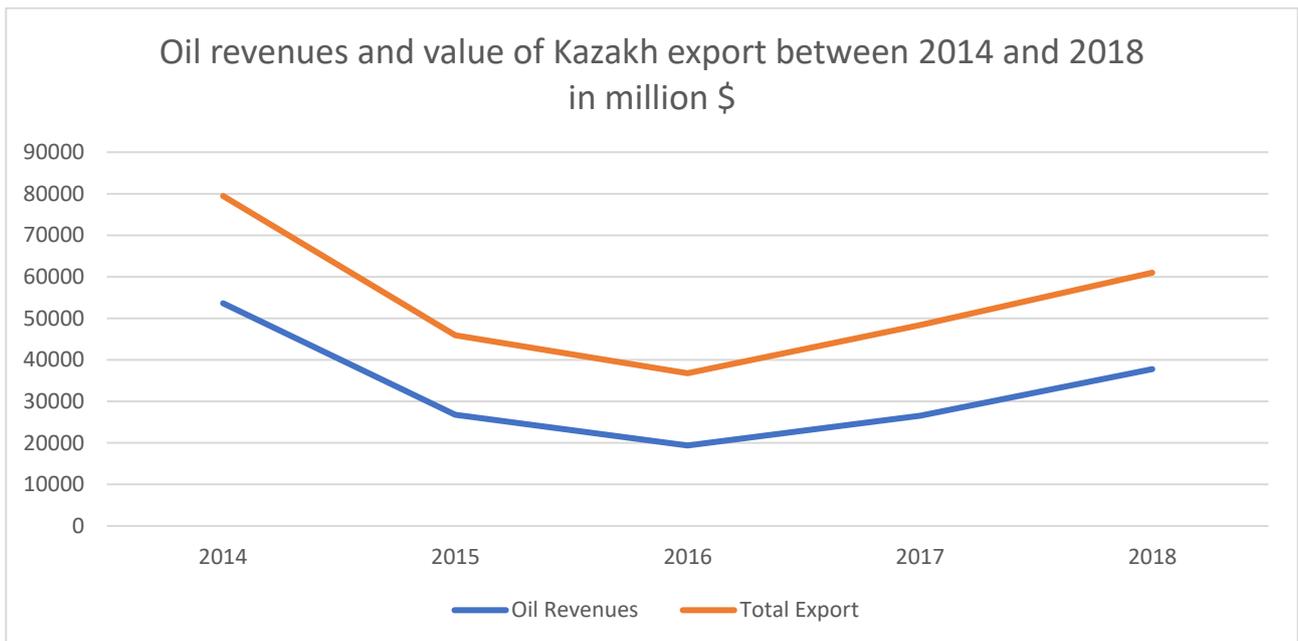
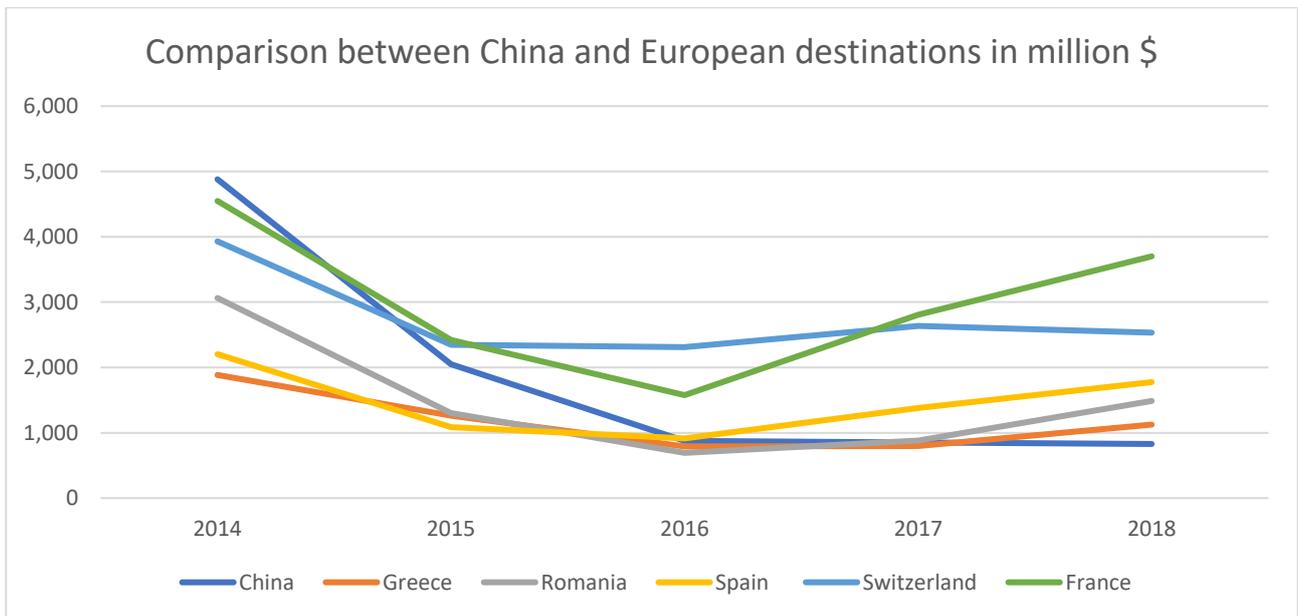
Appendix N.1 (continued)



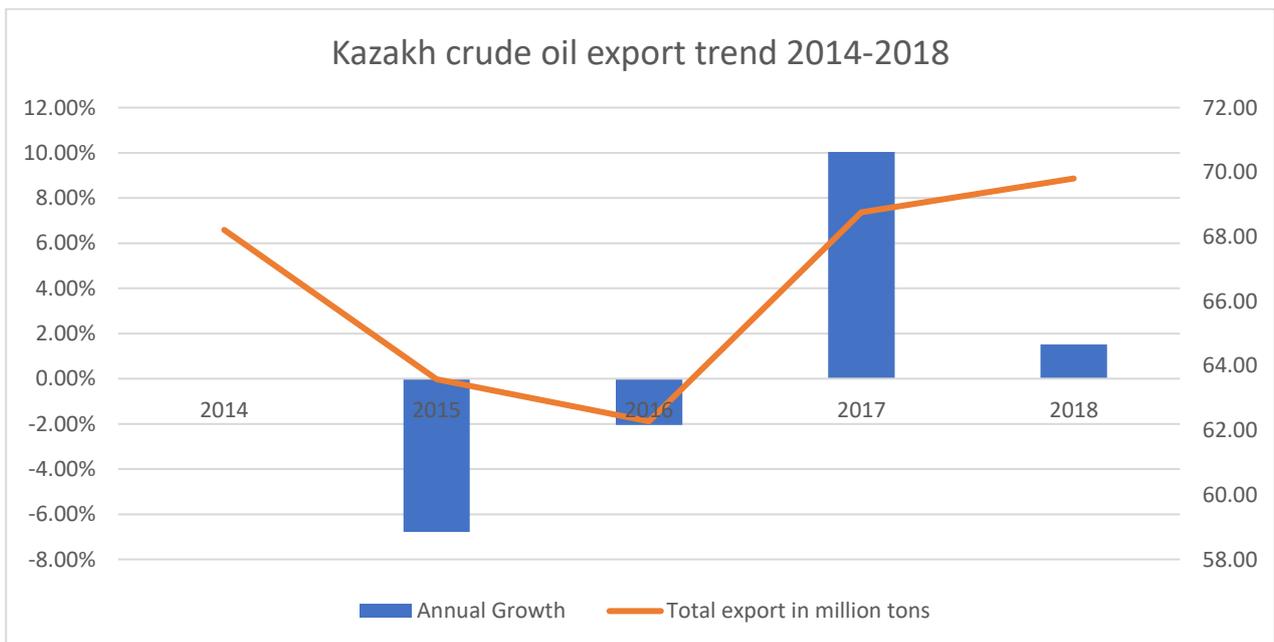
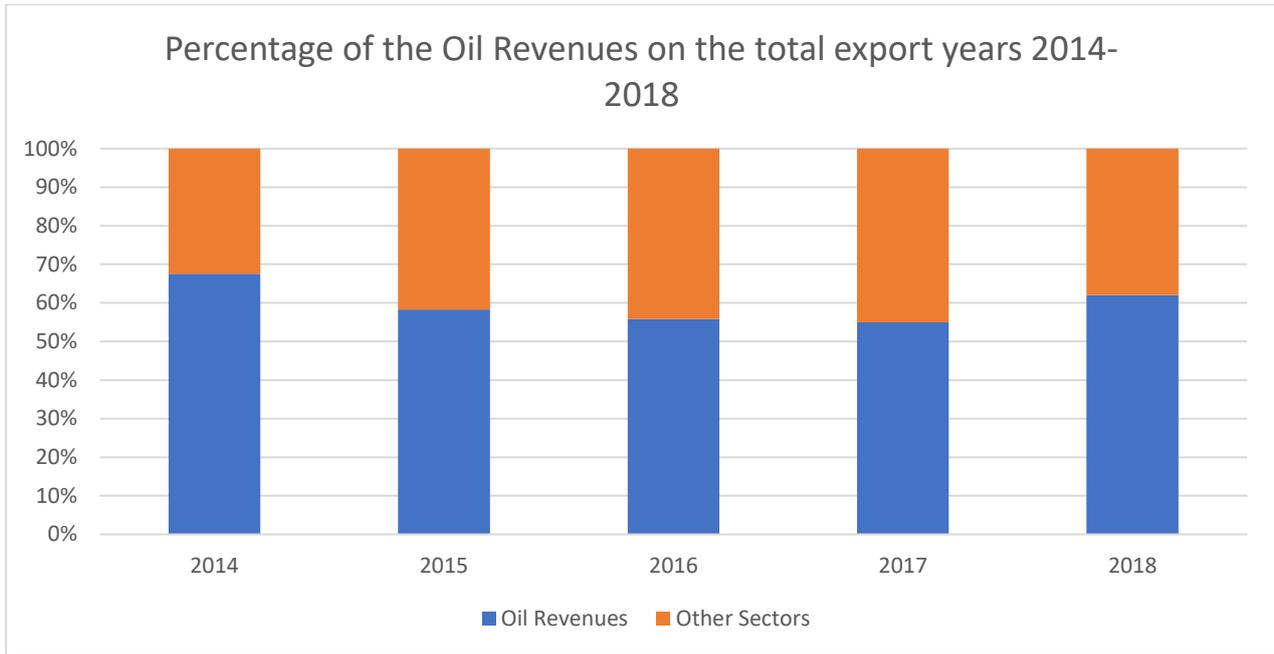
Appendix N.1 (continued)



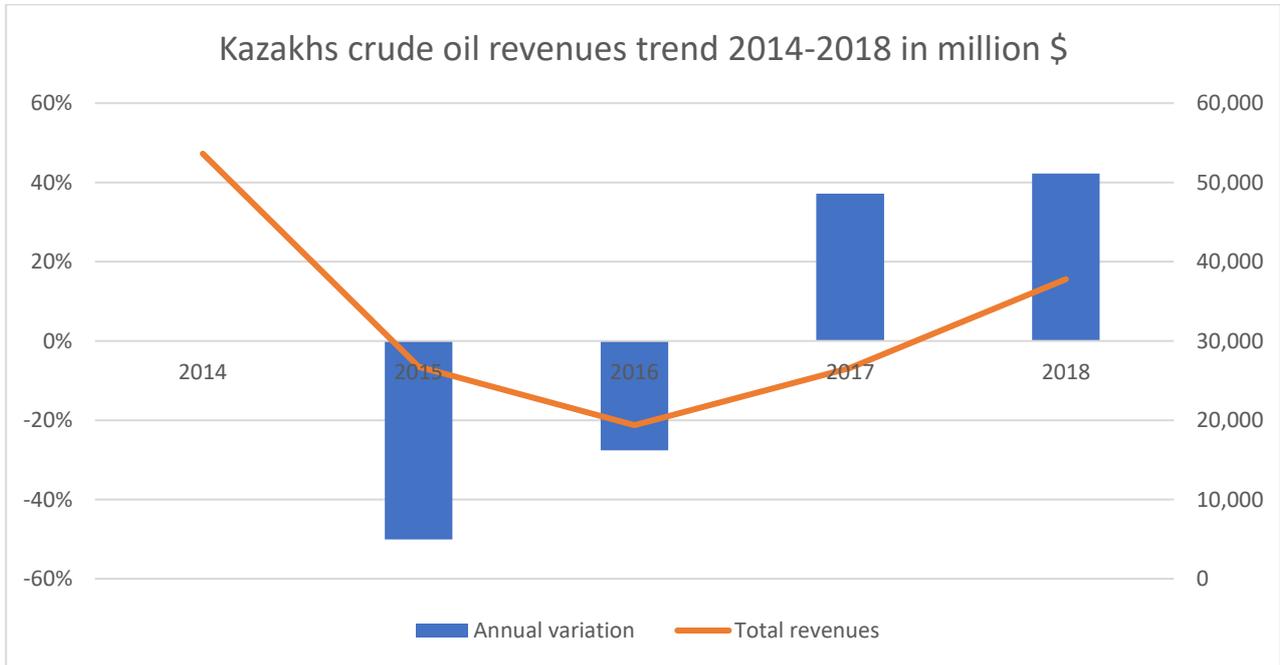
Appendix N.1 (continued)



Appendix N.1 (continued)

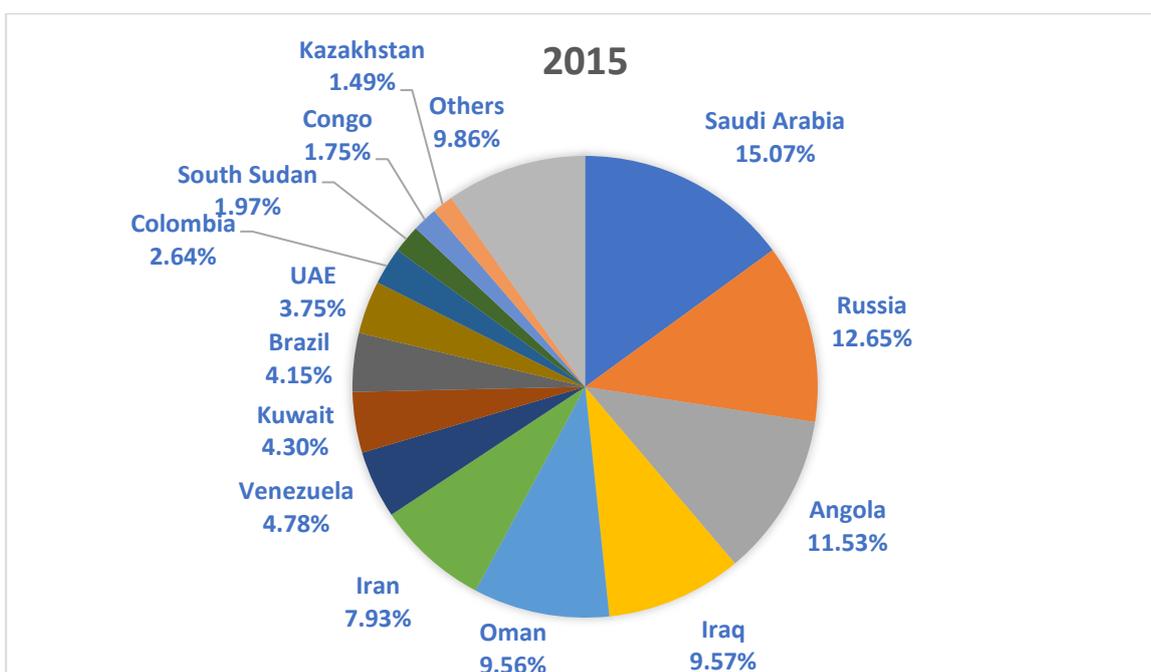
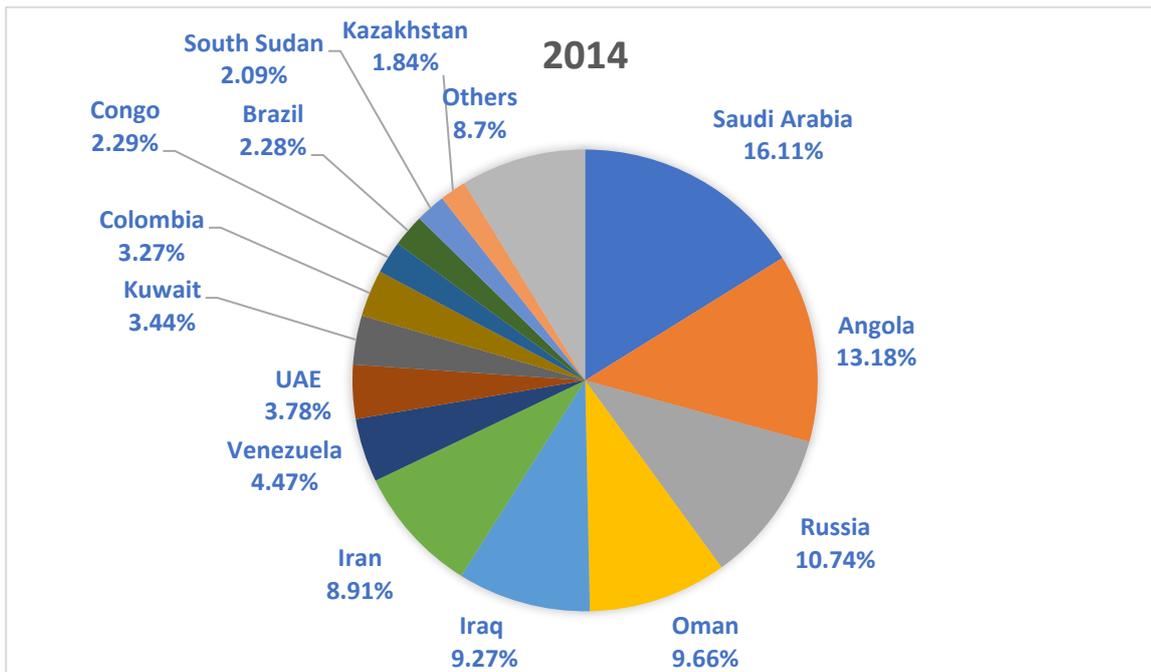


Appendix N.1 (continued)

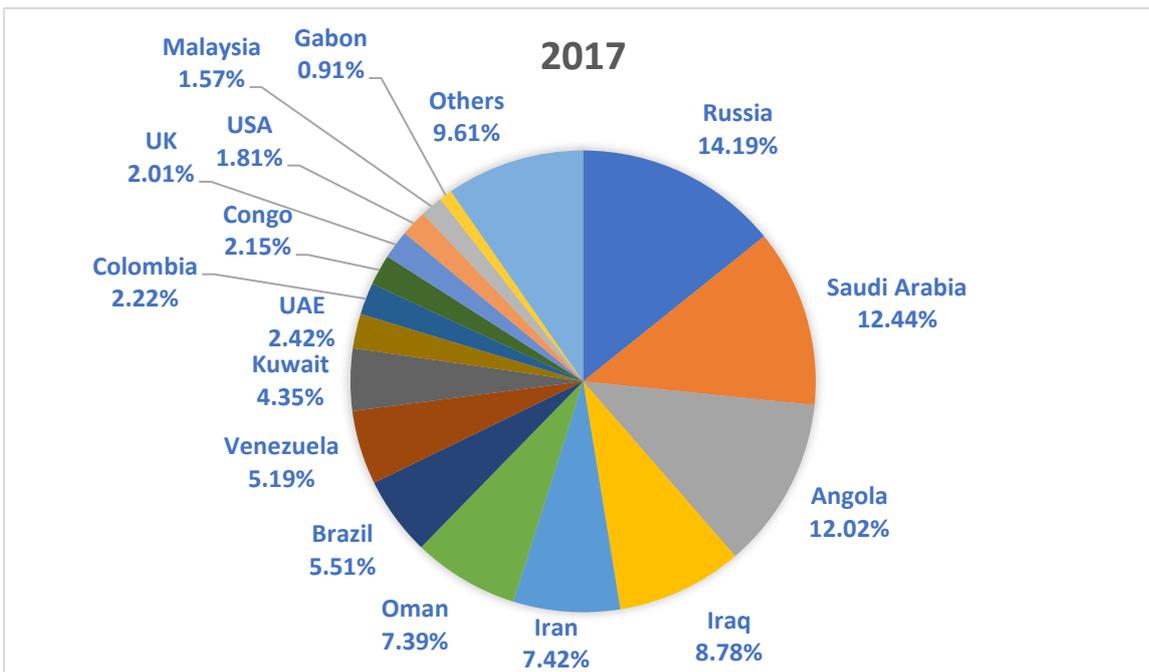
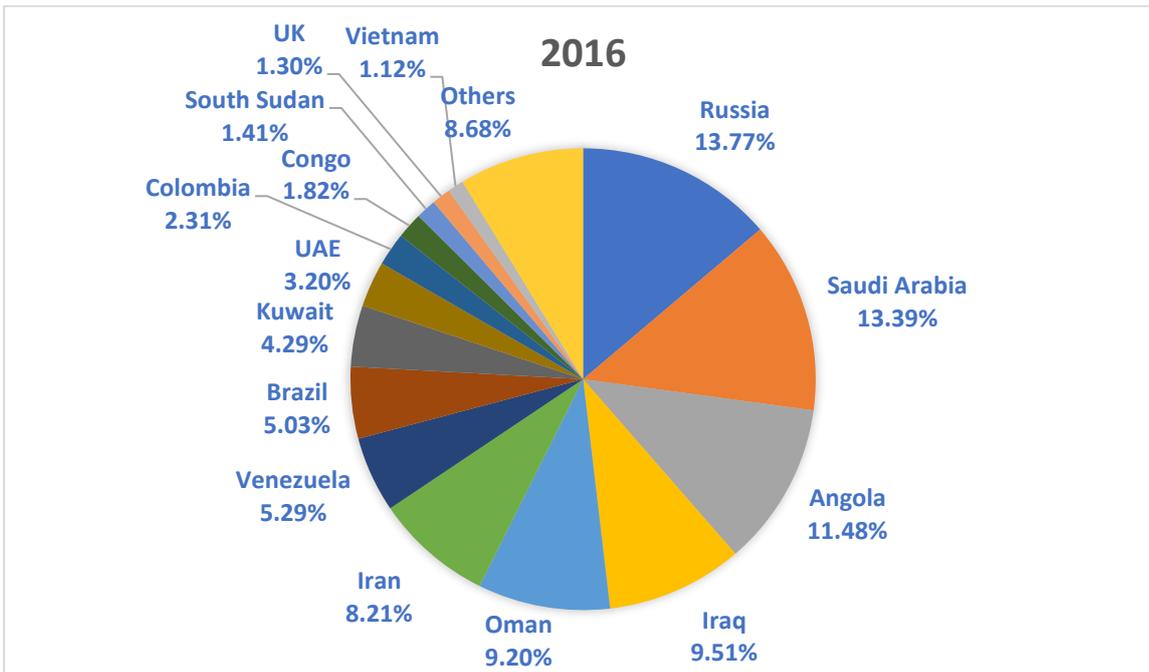


Appendix n. 2

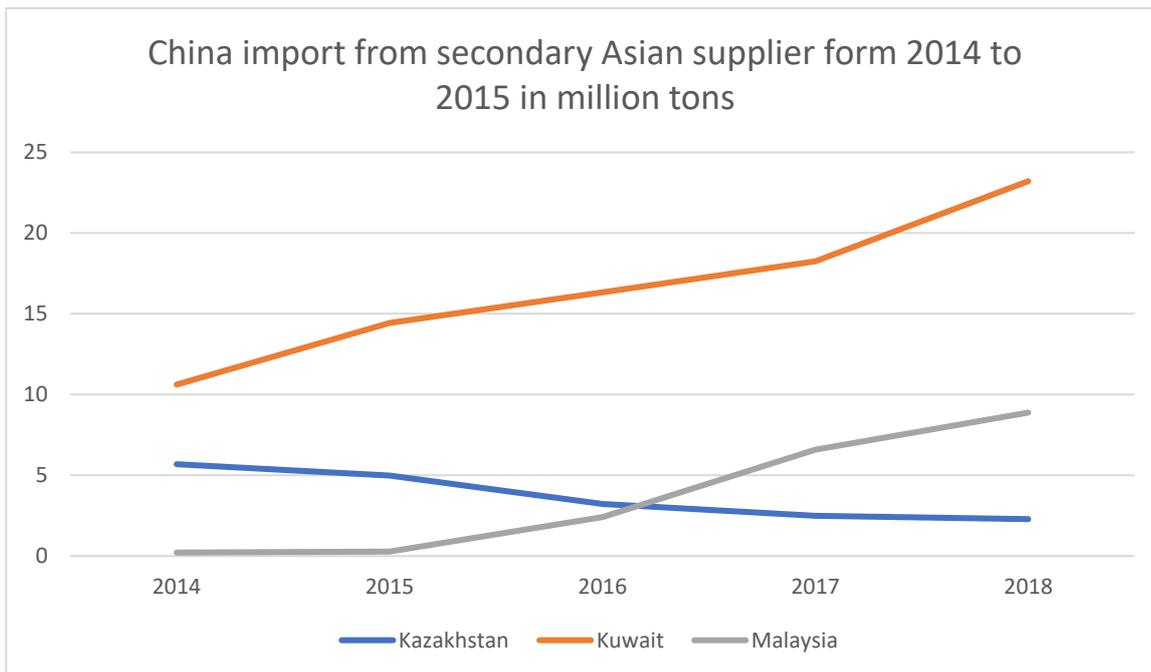
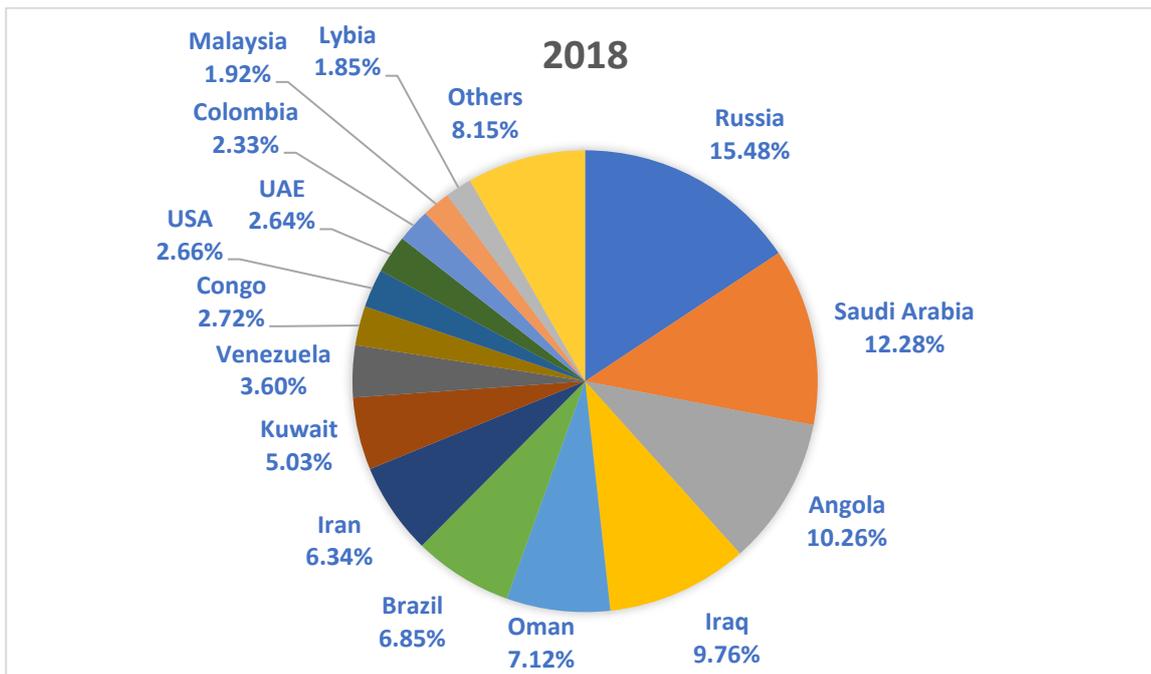
The graphs in this section concern the quantity of Chinese import of crude oil -in million tons- in the period 2014-2018 and are elaborated with the data taken by the UN Comtrade website.



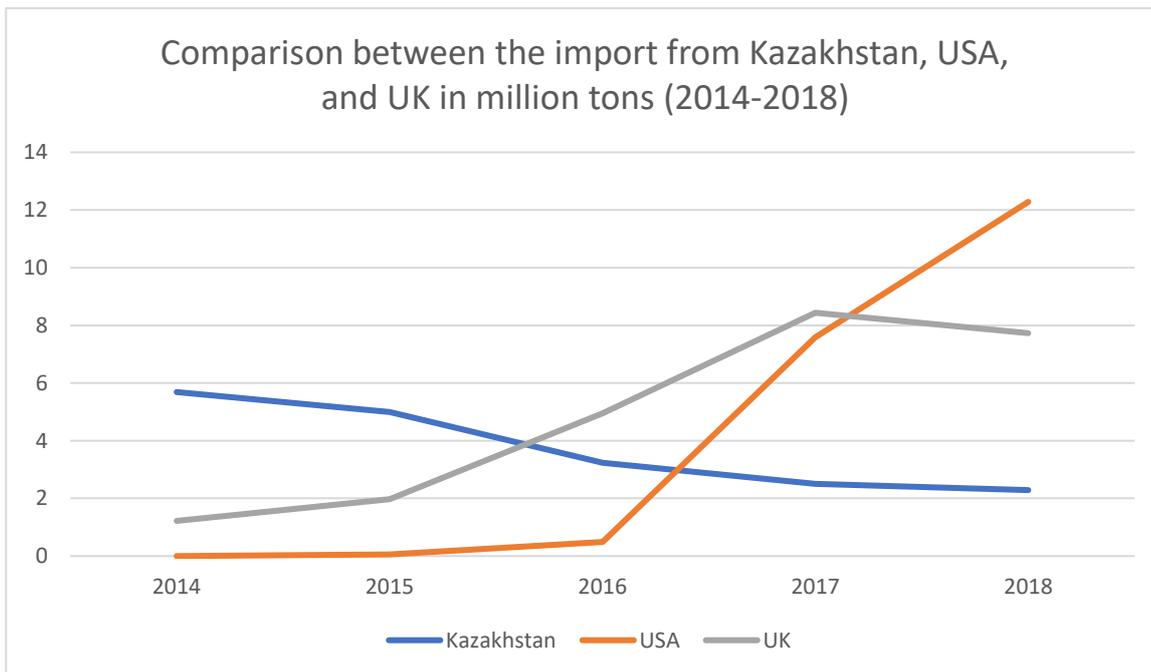
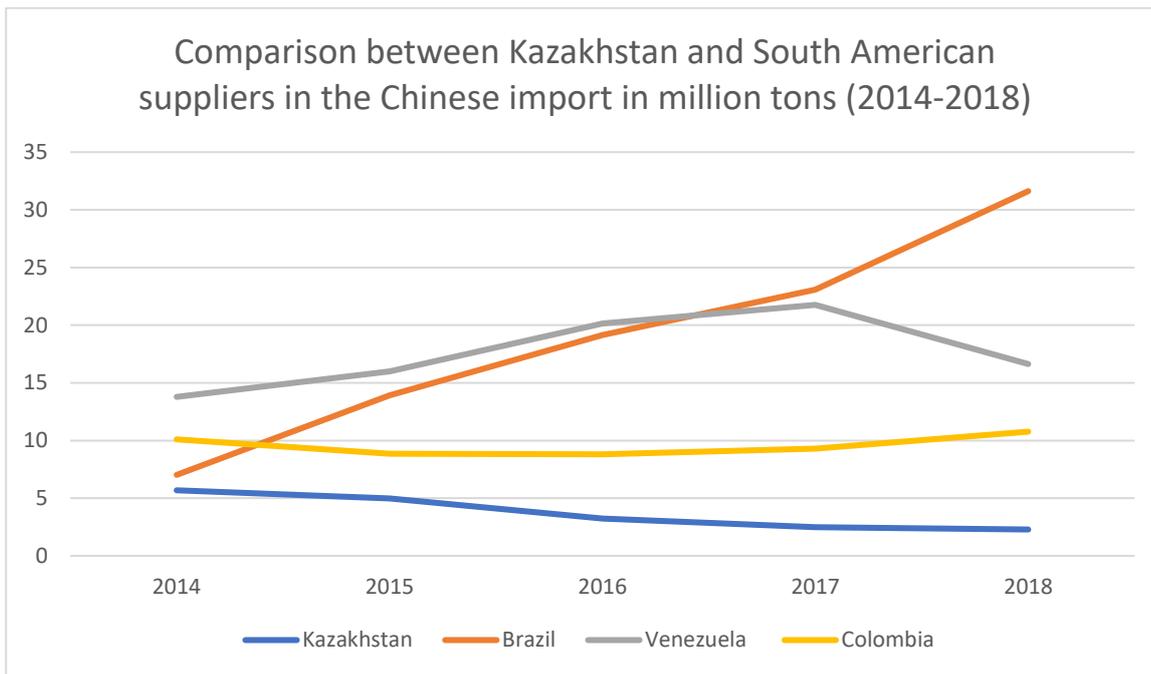
Appendix N.2 (continued)



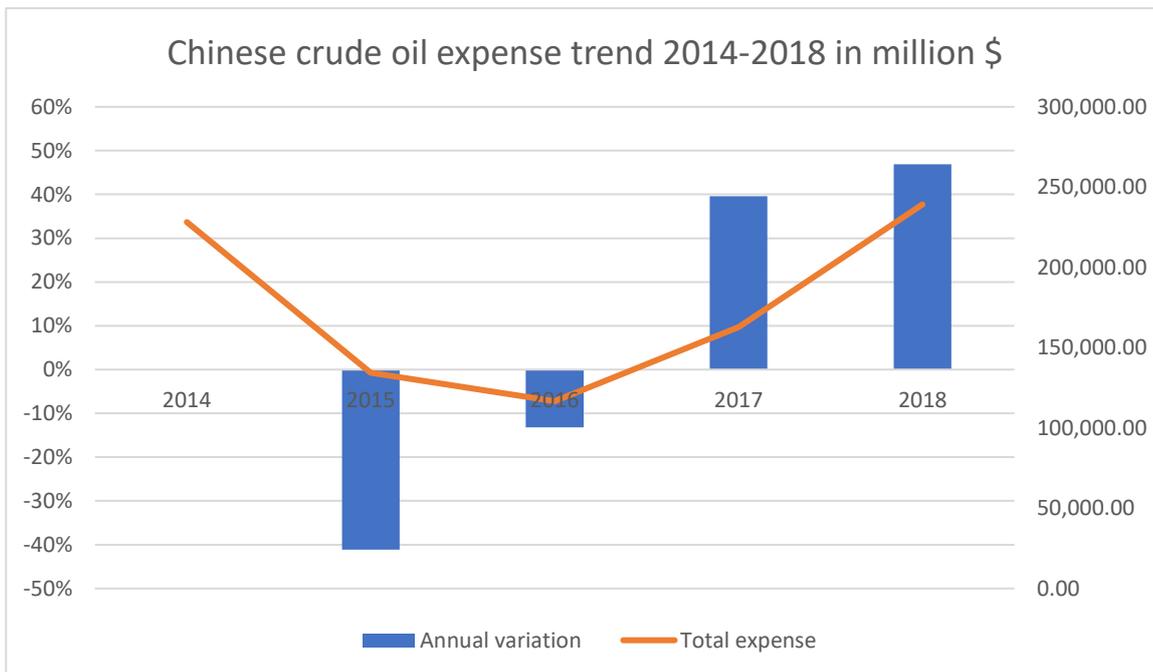
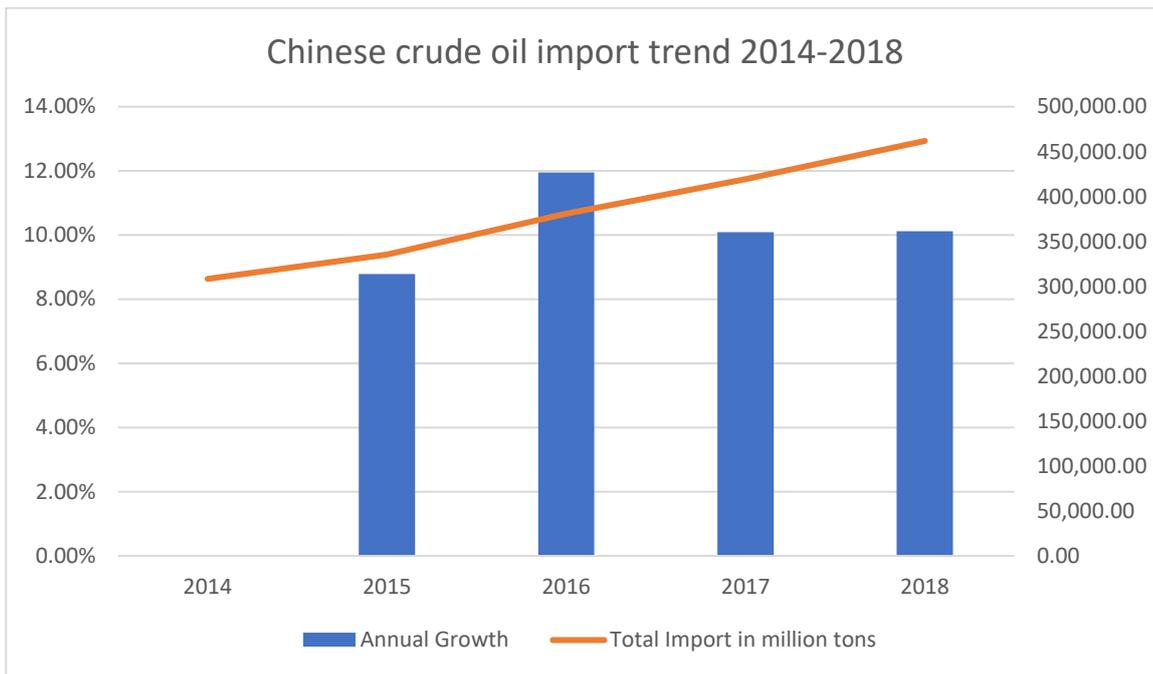
Appendix N.2 (continued)



Appendix N.2 (continued)



Appendix N.2 (continued)



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