

TARTU UNIVERSITY
Faculty of Social Sciences
Johan Skytte Institute of Political Studies

Adam Ziogas

NEGOTIATING HEGEMONY: THE DISCURSIVE CONSTRUCTION OF GEOPOLITICAL SPACE IN
KAZAKHSTANI FOREIGN POLICY

MA Thesis

Supervisor: Viacheslav Morozov, PhD

Tartu 2023

Declaration of Authorship

I have prepared this thesis independently. All the views of other authors, as well as data from literary sources and elsewhere, have been cited.

Word count of the thesis: 24 534 words

Adam Ziogas, 15.05.2023

Abstract

With heightened tensions between Russia and the West, and the growing influence of China, the geopolitical situation in Central Asia is actively changing. This brings into question the nature of the relationship between the Central Asian states and Russia. While engaged in necessary pragmatic relations with Moscow, Kazakhstan has needed to assert its independence and autonomy, especially at a time when the world is becoming more geopolitically unstable. This study specifically explores how the construction of geopolitical space in Kazakhstani discourse acts as a tool to limit regional hegemony. Through a Critical Discourse Analysis of Kazakhstani governmental and media output, it finds that the construction of regional spaces contributes to the limitation of regional hegemonic power. The emphasis on Central Asian regionalism creates a core within Eurasian integration processes which defends Central Asian interests against undue Russian influence. Similarly, the active promotion of multilateral regional formats across Asia introduces China as a counterweight to Russian influence. This simultaneously anchors them both in multilateral forums, preventing either one from becoming a hegemonic regional power. As such, this demonstrates that smaller states have an active role in negotiating the limits of great power competition.

Contents

DECLARATION OF AUTHORSHIP	1
ABSTRACT	2
ABBREVIATIONS	4
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	5
RESEARCH PROBLEM	5
RESEARCH DESIGN	6
THESIS STRUCTURE	8
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW	10
GEOPOLITICS AND HEGEMONY IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS	10
GEOPOLITICS OF CENTRAL ASIA	13
KAZAKHSTANI FOREIGN POLICY	15
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY	21
DISCOURSE ANALYSIS	21
SOURCE SELECTION	23
CHAPTER 4: EURASIA AND ITS DISCONTENTS	27
NEW AND IMPROVED: KAZAKHSTANI EURASIANISM	27
FIRST AMONG EQUALS: KAZAKHSTAN AND CENTRAL ASIAN REGIONALISM	32
TOWARDS THE SUNSET: KAZAKHSTAN, EUROPE, AND THE WEST	35
UNDERSTANDING THE POST-SOVIET: THE CIS AND THE QUESTION OF UKRAINE	39
CHAPTER 5: LOCATING ASIA	45
WHITHER CIVILISATIONAL GEOPOLITICS? TÜRKIYE AND CENTRAL ASIA	45
EMBRACING THE ASIAN WAY: SINGAPORE AS A ROLE MODEL	49
NOT QUITE GREAT: REGIONAL PLAYERS AND EXTERNAL INTERVENTION	51
BALANCE OF POWERS: CHINA IN CENTRAL ASIA	55
CONSTRUCTING ASIA: THE ROLE OF REGIONAL INSTITUTIONS	58
CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION	61
REFERENCES	67
APPENDIX: FULL DATA SET	77
NON-EXCLUSIVE LICENCE	86

Abbreviations

ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
BRI	Belt and Road Initiative
CANWFZ	Central Asian Nuclear Weapon Free Zone
CICA	Conference on Interaction and Confidence-building measures in Asia
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
CSTO	Collective Security Treaty Organisation
EAEU	Eurasian Economic Union
EU	European Union
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
OIC	Organisation of Islamic Cooperation
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe
SCO	Shanghai Cooperation Organisation
UAE	United Arab Emirates
USA	United States of America
USSR	Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics
WTO	World Trade Organisation

Chapter 1: Introduction

Research Problem

The end of the Cold War disrupted the established bipolar world order, depriving international actors of the stable global structure, leaving them scrambling to reassert themselves in a new emerging global space. This is particularly pertinent for the former Republics of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) which now had to create themselves as independent actors in the global space. Following these developments, the Central Asian Republics of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan have remained closely tied to Moscow as the primary power in the region. In the first instance, being geographically separate from Europe, they were not subject to the same pressures of Europeanisation as the countries of Central and Eastern Europe which have framed their development as a civilisational choice between East and West. Additionally, in the local context of Central Asia, other potential regional powers, such as China, Iran, and Türkiye, did not have a comparable combination of power of attraction and historical links with the Central Asian Republics as Russia to offer a different path of development in the 1990s. With changing global dynamics over the past three decades of their independence, and especially now in the context of Russia's war against Ukraine, this calls into question the foreign policy alignment of the Central Asian Republics as they navigate the increasingly untenable post-Soviet space.

Analyses of Eurasia within the framework of the post-Soviet space have traditionally focussed on Russia as the subject and primary actor, which minimises the agency of the Central Asian Republics. This trend is driven by the dominant frame of East-West civilisational geopolitics, which prioritises the position and interests of great powers, which in the European post-Cold War context are Russia, the European Union (EU), and the United States of America (USA). This however is not directly applicable to the Central Asian Republics, separated as they are from the European context and pressures. Following the war in Ukraine, popular analyses now highlight that the Central Asian Republics are capable of expressing their own interests contrary to Moscow, with every small disagreement making headlines as a concerted effort is made to distinguish the independent states of Central Asia from the former Soviet centre of Russia and its current war against Ukraine (e.g. Gotev 2023; Jordanova 2022; Lucas 2023; Umarov 2022a; 2022b). Thus, there needs to be a more considered study into the power hierarchies of Central Asia to demonstrate the agency and nuance in the

relationship between the Central Asian Republics and regional powers. Considering the differences between the Central Asian republics, Kazakhstan stands out due to its multi-vector foreign policy which sees it actively engage with a number of partners across the globe, pursuing a strategy of balanced independence. As such, it represents the best starting point to understand some of the pressures and strategies of the Central Asian republics to manage their relationship with Russia. Hence, this project aims to reconstruct the Central Asian space as viewed from Kazakhstan and explore how discursive practice works to negotiate competing hegemonic projects in the region. This goes beyond Russia, to examine also increasing Chinese influence, highlighting the inclusion, exclusion, and hierarchisation of actors in the discursive construction of regional spaces. This process both creates a space for Kazakhstan to pursue its own sovereign interests, and also defines a role for other regional actors, which is crucial in defining the limit of regional hegemony.

Research Design

To this end, this thesis asks the central research question: how do Kazakhstani elites negotiate power hierarchies through the discursive construction of geopolitical space in Central Asia? To answer this question, this project problematises the discursive construction of Central Asia, as discourses of space act to include, exclude, and hierarchise actors. This frames the project within the field of Critical Geopolitics, which is primarily concerned with how territory, far from being a material reality, is constructed in order to promote a particular vision of the world (Dijkink 1996, 2-3, 11; Dodds 1993, 71; Kuus 2007, 7; Ó Tuathail 1996; Svarin 2016, 129). While Ó Tuathail (1996, 59-60) argues that this discursive representation of the world is driven by hegemonic states exerting their view over their peripheries, as a discursive practice there is an active role of smaller states in negotiating and legitimising this representation of the world (Baumann 2018; Buranelli 2018, 382; Kuus 2007, 99; Zarycki 2014, 2-6). Thus, it is reasonable to expect that the discourses of Kazakhstani elites work to both legitimise and limit the extent of any hegemonic power in the region. This is reflected in Buranelli's concept of negotiated hegemony, which argues that through practices of negotiation, a smaller state "accepts, accommodates, and resists different conditions imposed by the hegemon" (2018, 385). Thus, this study aims to emphasise the role and perspective of Kazakhstan in managing hegemonic ambitions in the region.

This thesis explores how the construction of geopolitical space presents the arrangement of regionality, in the aim of negotiating hegemonic power. Through employing particular spatial discourses, Kazakh elites present a vision of their surrounding region which hierarchises the regional actors, positioning Kazakhstan and other actors in particular power relationships. In the first instance, it is important to examine the relative positioning between Russia and Kazakhstan to understand how Russia's regional hegemony is on the one hand acknowledged by Kazakh elites and also negotiated. For example, despite following Russia into Eurasian integration projects, such as the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), the discourses on Eurasia in Kazakhstan highlight its centrality to the region, which emphasises it as a primary actor and thus creates a space where Russian hegemony is, at least rhetorically, limited.

This thesis also examines the inclusion and exclusion of other actors beyond Russia in broader regional structures beyond Eurasia, which could balance or compete for hegemony. Hegemony of one power relies on the exclusion of other regional powers (Buranelli 2018, 381). Here, Kazakhstan's Eurasian centrality and multi-vector foreign policy act as balancing tools which limit Russian hegemony by bringing in other regional actors, and redefining the regional spaces around Kazakhstan. However, their inclusion is equally limited to prevent the emergence of simply another hegemon. This is seen by Kazakhstan's membership in both the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO), a post-Soviet institution under Russian direction, and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), a broader Asian initiative alongside China. This demonstrates a preference for multilateral regional cooperation which serves to disperse power, constraining the ability of a regional power to attain hegemon status. Additionally, the engagement in multiple regional spaces which are defined in Kazakhstani discourse implicate new neighbours, foci, and interests which limit the dominance of a single player. As Kazakhstan emphasises Asian initiatives over Eurasian initiatives, it moves away from a region defined by Russia's dominance to a broader region marked by the diversity of actors and diffuse power.

Behind the material institutionalisation of these regional spaces, there is a discursive process which needs to create and naturalise the regional space. Research on Russia by Svarin (2016) and Türkiye by Atmaca and Torun (2022) demonstrate how regions and ideas are constructed through discourses of space and used in the justification of the state's foreign

policy orientation. Following in the Constructivist stead of the Critical Geopolitics approach, this thesis takes discourse as its central object of study. While discourses do not necessitate a particular foreign policy course, an analysis of Kazakhstani discourse aims to deconstruct the accepted geopolitical terrain of Central Asia, and demonstrate the function of discourses in supporting Kazakhstan's multi-vector balancing act, by providing alternative and varied modes of regional identification. As such, the research entails Critical Discourse Analysis of presidential speeches, and editorials, opinion pieces, and government interviews published in a selection of Kazakhstani media outlets. Another critical field, Critical Discourse Analysis is concerned with deconstructing social wrongs and understanding their maintenance in social systems (Fairclough 2010, 231). In the context of Central Asia, and through a geopolitical lens, the social wrong in question is the unequal power relationships and the accepted dominance of great powers. The implicit approach is to deconstruct the accepted perspectives of various geopolitical spaces, to explore the nuances of varied power relationships in the region by examining the local construction of these spaces. Thus, the aim of this thesis is to explore the Kazakhstani construction of particular geopolitical spaces, including Central Asia and Eurasia. These geopolitical discourses represent different perceptions of the Central Asian space, and as such implicate different power hierarchies and roles for each actor.

Thesis Structure

Chapter 2 consists of a review of existing literature to explore the question of geopolitical space in Central Asia. The chapter is divided in three sections. The first section explores the theoretical field of Geopolitics and the study of hegemony and power relationships in International Relations. This presents Critical Geopolitics as a theoretical field which deconstructs traditional understandings of power and provides an opportunity for studying and understanding Kazakhstani foreign policy. It then examines the current state of research into Geopolitics of Central Asia, highlighting the main trends and established knowledge which contribute to the basis of the thesis. Finally, the chapter explores Kazakhstani foreign policy, examining the multi-vector foreign policy and the way this is presented, studied, and understood.

Moving then to the role of this thesis, Chapter 3 presents the methodological approach taken. Building on the previous chapter, it explains the chosen method of Critical Discourse Analysis, explaining what this approach entails, and how this contributes to the

aims of the thesis. This chapter then outlines the process behind the selection of sources, outlining the process of data collection.

Chapters 4 and 5 present the findings and analysis of the research. These chapters each cover a particular aspect of Kazakhstan's multi-vector foreign policy. By covering different vectors and exploring the way in which these regional spaces are constructed and prioritised in a Kazakhstani perspective, these chapters demonstrate how regionalisms are used to order geopolitical space, and thus negotiate regional hegemonies and maintain a role for Kazakhstan in its world view.

Chapter 4 explores developments in Eurasia, or alternative Kazakhstani perspectives of the post-Soviet space. It begins by tackling the question of Eurasia, exploring more deeply the relationship between Kazakhstan and Russia, and the role of other actors in the Eurasian space. In particular this means unpacking competing integration processes in the post-Soviet space, and also examining the role of Central Asian regionalism as a sub-regionalism and how these relationships contribute to a balancing against Russian hegemony. In exploring the evolving notions of the post-Soviet space, this chapter also tackles the question of Ukraine and developments in relations between Kazakhstan and its perception of the West.

Chapter 5 then explores the ambiguous question of Asia and how it is perceived in Kazakhstan. This opens the analysis to other perspectives of regionalism and explores the role of other regional powers. It looks at Turkic cooperation, regional security arrangements, and the idolisation of Singapore as examples of constructing geopolitical space and balancing competing influences, before finally tackling the rise of China as an actor in the Asian and Central Asian spaces. The aim of this chapter is to demonstrate how Kazakhstan's perspective of the world looks beyond Russia and the post-Soviet space.

Chapter 6 concludes the thesis, and provides an overview of the findings in response to the central question, how do Kazakhstani elites negotiate power hierarchies through the construction of geopolitical space? While the previous chapters have considered various aspects in isolation, this conclusion tries to tie various threads together by collating and comparing the findings of each of the preceding analytical chapters and provides an overview of this thesis' contribution to the study of Kazakhstani foreign policy. As a part of this, it also acknowledges some of the limitations of this work and provides some avenues which could be considered for future research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter explores existing research into the major themes of this thesis and is divided in three sections which together provide an overview of the field of Geopolitics, its application to Central Asia, and Kazakhstani foreign policy. The first section outlines the theoretical background which underpins the thesis. This covers the field of Geopolitics and its contribution to the understanding of international relations in Central Asia, exploring specifically the approach of Critical Geopolitics in the examination of power relations. The second section then provides an overview of the application of Geopolitics to research on Central Asia. Finally, this chapter concludes by exploring existing paradigms of Kazakhstani foreign policy, specifically examining the multi-vector foreign policy of Kazakhstan, and each of Kazakhstan's main vectors: Russia; the West; and Asia. This section critiques the division of research into each vector and, in the case of Asia, the ambiguity of the term. These sections together demonstrate the importance and effectiveness of the discursive approach adopted by the thesis in the construction of regional spaces as viewed from Kazakhstan.

Geopolitics and hegemony in International Relations

Geopolitical studies are usually limited in their scope as they attempt to tackle the major dilemmas of the great game and focus on the role of great powers to expand their influence. In a geopolitical outlook, the international system is driven by hegemonic states exerting their influence over their peripheries, competing for influence, resources, and survival (Cooley 2014; Ó Tuathail 1996, 59-60). This perspective raises the question of the role of non-centre states in the international system. This thesis thus addresses the broad question of how peripheral states manage their subordinate position in world affairs. A great power-focused geopolitical approach is inadequate to answer this question.

When considering unequal power relations between two states in a close and highly dependent relationship, the major influence is Wallerstein's (1974) world systems analysis. This introduced the widely popular idea of centre and periphery, which proposes the structural dependence and subjugation of the periphery to the centre. Emerging from debates surrounding the decolonisation process and the economic dominance of the Western centre in the late twentieth century, this is intertwined with dependency theory which was developed firstly to understand the economic underdevelopment of Latin America in relation to North America (Chirot & Hall 1982). Two problems present themselves with these

approaches. The first is that they are analyses rooted in political economy, which generally provides a quantitative and thus uncompromising view of the world. Wallerstein for his part is more concerned with a Marxist question of the historical development of set power hierarchies. Both these perspectives aim to justify set outcomes, identifying structural features as contributing to the world hierarchy. The focus on structure and the aim of understanding how it defines current relations means that these approaches are not concerned with the capacity for change in these unequal relations. The second is that the application of post-colonial approaches designed to understand the largely resource-defined relationship between the colonial centre and its periphery territories is limited in regions outside of this specific colonial context, such as Eastern and Central Europe and Central Asia under the USSR, where other factors beyond resources and economy dominate interstate relations. For example, while Zarycki (2014) adopts the traditionally economic world systems analysis and specifically its concept of centre-periphery relations as the basis of his analysis of Central and Eastern Europe, his argument coalesces around the discursive work involved in states such as Poland emerging from the shadow of the USSR and realigning to an in effect Western regional hegemony. Therefore, in approaching the question of Central Asia, there are limits to the understanding of these relations within the perspective of post-coloniality given the active and differing political paths of the post-communist states.

As such, many studies into post-communist development focus on this civilisational question of becoming the West. In this perspective, the construction of a civilisational border along Europe's periphery is a dynamic process which requires a more qualitative approach, and as such studies across various fields emphasise the role of narratives and discourse (e.g. Bakić-Hayden 1995; Kuus 2007). Returning then to Geopolitics, in the current period it has witnessed a shift away from the past focus on hard power, both political and military, towards a competitive geopolitical space defined primarily by culture and values (Kuus 2007, 3). This is perhaps most well-presented through Huntington's (1993; 1996) clash of the civilisations thesis, which effectively provides a culturally divided map to explain the post-Cold War era (Ó Tuathail 1996, 243). However, Huntington's thesis has been challenged on multiple grounds, not least the lack of clarity behind what exactly constitutes a civilisation, and the impact this has on his questionable division of the globe (Ó Tuathail 1996, 244). Nevertheless, this proves the need for a critical approach to the study of Geopolitics.

Critical Geopolitics is defined by its aims to dissect representations of the world, treating them as discursive tools rather than observatory remarks. Critical Geopolitics challenges the geographical determinism of classical Geopolitics, to propose that ultimately geopolitics is a discursive practice of representation of the world (Dijkink 1996, 2-3, 11; Dodds 1993, 71; Kuus 2007, 7; Ó Tuathail 1996, 59; Svarin 2016, 129). As such, the organisation of the world should not be taken for granted and should instead be understood as a particular perception of the world which serves to advance certain interests. Recalling the imperial roots of Geopolitics, Ó Tuathail categorises geopolitics as a competition between authorities to “organise, occupy, and administer space” (1996, 1). Thus, while in a practical sense the politicisation of geography serves to naturalise the existence and authority of certain states, Critical Geopolitics highlights the discursive and representational nature of this process (Ó Tuathail 1996, 11, 12, 165). Thus, Critical Geopolitics should focus on the deconstruction of spatial identifiers, which are not innocent, empirical geographic labels, but rather tools of power diffusion. While Ó Tuathail’s work focuses on the role of hegemonic states as the source of these spatial discourses, subsequent studies have seized upon the discursive nature of Critical Geopolitics to explore the role of smaller states in recognising and reproducing hegemonic discourses (e.g. Baumann 2018; Buranelli 2018, 382; Kuus 2007, 99; Zarycki 2014, 2-6). As such, this approach demonstrates a method of examining the ways in which smaller states are engaged with practices of legitimisation of hegemonic discourses.

Consequently, this study finds it suitable to engage a Critical Geopolitics approach, which, founded in discursive practice, is precisely interested in the role of smaller players in supporting and justifying the hegemonic intentions of the larger players (Baumann 2018; Buranelli 2018, 382; Kuus 2007, 99; Zarycki 2014, 2-6). In the context of Kazakhstan, this means deconstructing the representation of Central Asia as a playground between Russia and China. It chooses instead to focus instead on the Kazakhstani perspective of the region, and how the discursive construction of it defines the role and importance of external actors and powers.

In examining the geopolitics of Central Asia, this paper also builds on the research by Buranelli (2018) which explores the theory of spheres of influence and introduces the idea of the negotiation of hegemony. Taking issue with the great power focus of International Relations, Buranelli aims to overcome the subjugation of smaller states, empowering their

agency to negotiate regional hegemonies (2018, 382). In his analysis of Central Asia, Buranelli argues that negotiation occurs as a smaller state “accepts, accommodates, and resists different conditions imposed by the hegemon” (2018, 385). He proposes that these actions are a function of actors, practices, and discourses (Buranelli 2018, 386), but the article specifically focuses on practices, that is specific events where Central Asian states have gone against the interests and explicit wishes of Russia, which in his argument thus exemplify the limits of Russian hegemony. However, with such a heavy focus on practices, and Russia, this article leaves untouched broader possibilities of negotiated hegemony, and often does not question the reasoning behind the contrarian actions taken by Central Asian states. This leaves open the role of discourse in aiding the negotiation of Russian hegemony in Central Asia. To this end, this thesis endeavours to employ a discursive analysis to broaden the scope of Central Asian negotiation of regional hegemonies. Rather than focusing on a stocktake of policies attributed as either pro- or anti-Russian, this thesis problematises the diverse external relations of Kazakhstan and examines how their rhetorical presentation delineates the depth of each of these relations.

Geopolitics of Central Asia

A number of studies have approached the question of Kazakhstani foreign policy through an exploration of Geopolitics and discourse. Ambrosio and Lange explore the ‘geopolitical code’ of Kazakhstan across “18 annual and formal presidential addresses given in consecutive years from 1997 to 2014” (2014, 540). The major finding is that as far as bilateral relations are concerned, Kazakhstan’s perception of the world is dominated by Russia and China (Ambrosio & Lange 2014, 542-543). Surprisingly, in terms of international organisations, the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) is most popular behind the broad category of Eurasian integration, with a relatively low count for the CSTO (Ambrosio & Lange 2014, 545). However, as their approach is limited to a more quantifiable content analysis, it needs to be read carefully. The authors for example acknowledge that while Afghanistan appears as the third most mentioned country, the vast majority of its mentions are from a single text in 2000, and Kazakhstan assumed the chair of the OSCE in 2010, boosting the prevalence, if not the overall general importance, of the organisation (Ambrosio & Lange 2014, 543, 545). With an eye on Geopolitics, the authors also do not directly address the relatively high rank of Singapore in Kazakhstani discourse. Kucera notes that Singapore functions as a model of development for Kazakhstan, which is torn between

Western economic and Eastern political systems, rejecting the European political model yet perceiving itself as in some way European (2017, 331, 332, 344). These seemingly paradoxical and certainly complex dynamics are beyond the remit of a simple content analysis and merit further exploration. This thesis aims to deepen this research by examining more qualitatively the meaning Kazakhstan applies to its relations with various countries in order to be able to illuminate power relations more definitively through the definition of geopolitical space and the inherent inclusion, exclusion, and hierarchisation of actors within those spaces.

The studies which do take a broader regional approach highlight the role that the construction of regional spaces acts as a framework for foreign policy pursuits. Two such studies, somewhat related to Central Asia, focus on the construction of various spaces in the foreign policies of Russia (Svarin 2016) and Türkiye (Atmaca & Torun 2022). In his study of Russia, Svarin notes the importance of the construction of regions in the pursuit of a Russian national identity and international role (2016, 129, 138). He identifies three regionalisms within Russian foreign policy which are then used to justify its engagement in global affairs: Eurasia, the Euro-Atlantic, and the Asia-Pacific (Svarin 2016, 129, 138). By dividing the world in this way, Russia is able to carve a role for itself in each region. Conversely, in their study of Türkiye, Atmaca and Torun (2022) use geopolitical visions as an explanation for the shift in Turkish foreign policy. They identify three competing concepts in Turkish foreign policy: Europeanisation, neo-Ottomanism, and Eurasianism (Atmaca & Torun 2022, 114). Each of these three proposes a different regional focus of Turkish foreign policy, either towards Europe, its immediate region, or its broader region and the Islamic world, respectively. Importantly, while the exact formation of each region may overlap, the place of Türkiye is different in each, and therefore the role of foreign partners and Turkish engagement with them will also differ depending on the underlying concept being pursued. For example, a Türkiye intent on Europeanisation will interact with the Western Balkans differently to a Türkiye exploring a more neo-Ottoman foreign policy. Together these studies demonstrate the importance of understanding local perspectives of regions as a way in which to make sense of the world and thus rationalise foreign policy behaviour.

In the case of Kazakhstan, Anceschi comes closest to this kind of approach, but his aim is more to explore the emergence of Eurasianism in Kazakhstan and the role it has played in foreign policymaking (2022, 2-3). As such, the study is once again orientated strongly towards

Russia, exploring the various cooperation projects of the post-Soviet space. Additionally, such studies which do engage a discursive approach tend to focus on the construction of a particular idea. With the prevalence of Eurasianism as a particular construct in Kazakhstani foreign policy, a number of studies try to tease this out and explore how it is presented and what it means exactly (e.g. Anceschi 2022). This in the end usually reverts to a comparison between the meaning of Eurasianism in Kazakhstan and in its traditional Russian context (e.g. Baumann 2018; Laruelle 2002; 2012, 171-172). This kind of approach neglects a broader exploration of the discursive construction of Eurasia, and indeed neglects other potential understandings of the region. By focusing on the ideology, domestic factors are emphasised as the central question is one of policymaking and its relation to social and political developments inside Kazakhstan. This thesis however has a stronger focus on its expression in regional organisations, by exploring the inclusion, exclusion, and role of foreign actors from a Kazakhstani perspective across various regional arrangements, rather than producing a schema for a definition of Eurasia.

Kazakhstani Foreign Policy

A number of milestones and key events have marked the development of regionalism in Kazakhstani foreign policy since its independence in 1991, including the wars in Afghanistan and Ukraine, as well as Kazakhstan-specific events such as the 2019 resignation of *Elbasy* [Leader of the Nation], the long-running President since independence, Nursultan Nazarbayev, and the *Qandy qañtar* [Bloody January] protests of 2022. Across these events has been an evolution of regional concerns, cooperation, and integration. Broadly speaking, four periods can be identified in regional developments in Central Asia. The first period covers developments immediately following the independence of Kazakhstan. During this regional projects were very much limited to the post-Soviet space, and can rather be viewed as primarily reintegration projects (Anceschi 2022, 108). The second period, beginning sometime in the late 1990s and continuing into the 2000s witnesses a shift away from a post-USSR-centric focus and the emergence of broader regional projects, and the solidification of regional institutions. Subsequently, starting from the early 2010s the EAEU emerged as the premier Eurasian project. However, its development was soon overshadowed in the third period by the annexation of Crimea and the war in Eastern Ukraine, which challenged the internal cohesion of the Customs Union in the face of Western sanctions against Russia (Anceschi 2022, 130-132; Kassen 2018, 325-326). The fourth period begins with 2019 as a

significant year for Kazakhstan, with the resignation of Nazarbayev and transfer of power to Kassym-Jomart Tokayev. Soon after, significant challenges emerged Kazakhstan, including the Qandy qañtar protests and subsequent CSTO intervention, and Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022 which further challenged any semblance of unity in regional organisations such as the EAEU.

The majority of research into Kazakhstan and Kazakhstani foreign policy is focussed on the formative early years of independence as a key time when the state was being established and its foreign policy defined. As such, a lot of research carries a justifiable heavy focus on state- and nation-building (e.g. Anceschi 2014; 2022; Laruelle 2021). This brings into question the role of identity. In this genre of study, the central question is the basis of the formation of the Kazakhstani state, and in particular its differentiation from the former Soviet centre of Russia. This delves into a deep field of ethno-politics which occasionally spills over into questions over the integrity of the Kazakhstani state considering its Russian-populated Northern regions (Anceschi 2022, 12-13). However, identity is a tricky concept in International Relations and as such should be carefully and selectively conceptualised. As explored by Brubaker and Cooper (2000), definitions and uses abound, and misuse is common. As such, this thesis does not engage with these early years, or debate Kazakh identity.

This thesis in particular is centred on the question of Kazakhstani foreign policy and its expression through external relations in regional formats. As such, the identity in question is a relational one, and not a study of the characteristics of being Kazakh. This follows the work of Campbell who, contrary to the focus on characteristics, moved towards identity as relational and explored the discursive construction of threats as an exercise in internal-external differentiation, and thus an exercise in identity-making (1998, 3, 60). Necessarily embedded in his securitised approach to the definition of threats is a focus on negative association. In contrast, this thesis explores positive association through the creation and definition of regional space. While this does not exclude the possibility of threat definition, the focus is much more on how the creation of positive associations, regional groupings, work to discursively materialise a certain worldview which defines the roles of each of the involved actors. In the specific context of Central Asia, the big question is how these regional arrangements aid smaller states to negotiate regional hegemonic power. Thus, this thesis moves away from questions of Kazakhstani identity writ large, choosing instead to explore

specifically the roles and hierarchies created in the regional discourses of Kazakhstani foreign policy.

The thesis also carries a focus on more contemporary developments in order to understand the changes in the region and move away from a continued emphasis of the region as just post-Soviet. In contrast to the breadth of research on Kazakhstan's early years of independence, there is not so much recent academic research which addresses more contemporary developments and the challenges they have posed to Kazakhstan's independent multi-vector foreign policy. In contrast to the identity- and state-based research of the early years, later research has shifted to explore the emerging regional constructs and their motives and consequences for the region. Due to the nature of the EAEU, the challenges of the social, political, and economic transformation of the 1990s, and Kazakhstan's relationship with Russia, much literature covers economic data to concretely demonstrate Kazakhstan's dependence on Russia (e.g. Anceschi 2022, 139-145; Koch 2013). This approach thus somewhat neglects the potentiality for moments of resistance and does not address broader questions of how power hierarchies are constructed. Even for those with a focus beyond the post-Soviet space, similar initiatives such as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) also lend themselves to quantitative economic analyses (e.g. Anceschi 2022, 143), which similarly try to quantify the impact of this endeavour, rather than more qualitative studies which examine the potential change of power dynamics in Eurasia. Where power dynamics are examined, this is between Russia and China and their strategies, with little room for the Central Asian Republics (e.g. Kaczmarek 2017). Thus, this paper engages qualitative research to go beyond the economic figures, highlighting the power dynamics and the role of Kazakhstan in negotiating them.

Broadly, Kazakhstani foreign policy is singularly defined by the idea of multi-vector policy. Hanks (2009, 259) defines this as a policy with a pragmatic, rather than an ideological foundation. Certainly, within Kazakhstani discourse there is an explicit preference for pragmatic relations, and a rejection of strict bloc or alliance formation (Ambrosio & Lange 2014, 551; Anceschi 2022, 21, 22). In forming Kazakhstan's foreign policy, Ambrosio and Lange (2014, 546) identify four main sources of influence, which also explain its choice for a Eurasian identity: the East-West dichotomy, Russia, Türkiye, and the Islamic world. By engaging discourses of a bridge between East and West (Ambrosio & Lange 2014, 546; Anceschi 2022,

49; Mostafa 2013, 164), Kazakhstan contributes to its security by not locking itself into one singular alignment which would put it in one category to the detriment of another. This concern explains the aversion to bloc politics and emphasis on pragmatism. Hence, the emphasis on multi-vector policy is justified as it prevents Kazakhstan having to make an exclusionary choice and is central to Kazakhstan's development as an independent state.

Considering the different vectors of Kazakhstani foreign policy, the majority of research into Kazakhstani politics is overshadowed by Russia and its relations with, and impact on, Kazakhstan. Given Russia's position as the previous centre of the USSR, it is the focus of much of the work on regionalism in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and Eurasia (e.g. Anceschi 2022). Additionally, Eurasianism as an ideology is acknowledged as a Russian phenomenon (Bassin 2003; Laruelle 1999; 2004; 2012), which further highlights the prioritisation of Russia in research, where Kazakhstani variants appear simply as a point of comparison (e.g. Baumann 2018; Laruelle 2002; 2012, 171-172). To this end, Buranelli's (2018) study of spheres of influence effectively highlights the fact that Russia is viewed as the main power in the region, and as such everything revolves around it. Therefore, while there are studies into Kazakhstani perspectives, these are driven by a particular worldview which reduces the study to an exploration of Kazakhstani perspectives on Russia, neglecting other topics which emerge in local discourse, such as the examples drawn from Ambrosio and Lange (2014): Afghanistan, the OSCE, and Singapore; which receive far less attention.

This centrality of Russia is also a problem afflicting broader research in International Relations which, seduced by ideas of the great game, has a tendency to focus on the attitudes and behaviour of the great powers as the movers and drivers of the international system, which in Central Asia are primarily Russia, China, and the USA, which then form the focus of studies of the region (e.g. Cooley 2014; Menon 2007; Rumer 2007; Trenin 2007; Zhao 2007). Within this strand of research there is thus not much room given to the agency and interests of smaller players who are always viewed as limited by the powers around them.

In elaborating the multi-vector concept, as a response to the focus on Russia, the second vector of Kazakhstan's foreign policy to be considered is the collective West. Here two conflicting points need to be made. The first is that being quite geographically distant from the EU, East-West narratives are not as immediately applicable to Kazakhstan as they are to studies of the post-Soviet or post-communist transition that occurred in Central and Eastern

Europe (e.g. Kuus 2007; Zarycki 2014). On the other hand, what is unique about Kazakhstan is that it has actually quite developed relations with various Western countries, organisations, and institutions. In particular, Kazakhstan is involved in the Partnership for Peace (P4P) programme of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and was particularly supportive of the USA in Afghanistan and Iraq (Hanks 2009; Kassen 2018, 329). However, this support is largely due to an understandable concern for regional security which is threatened by the unstable situation in Afghanistan (Ambrosio & Lange 2014, 543; Kassen 2018, 333). Thus, any analysis of Western-Kazakhstani relations cannot merely be restricted by the narratives of East and West. It needs to better contextualise Western relations as one of multiple vectors, highlighting the importance of these relations to contributing to Kazakhstani interests, rather than simply being a binary opposite to Russia, and focussing on relations with the West in the context of post-communist transition.

While Asia remains as a vector of Kazakhstani foreign policy, this vector is poorly defined and as a consequence not very well articulated in its relation to the other vectors. The reason for this is largely because in traditional Eurasianism, Asia remains undefined, merely a counter to the heavy focus on Russia's relations with Europe (Laruelle 2012, 4). In this context, Asia is simply presented as a non-specific Other. This presents and reproduces the binary East-West divide (Kucera 2017). However, considering the case of Kazakhstan, it needs to be made more specific. Within the context of Kazakhstan's external relations, Asia can be considered to include China, Türkiye, and the Islamic world, particularly Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) (Kassen 2018, 327). In this instance, Asia would be more effectively subdivided into other categories which better articulate Kazakhstan's foreign policy choices. The three major vectors here are Central Asia, the Middle East, or the Islamic world, and China. While there are some studies which may focus on one specific aspect, such as Kazakhstan and Central Asian regionalism (Anceschi 2022, 56-92; Kassen 2018) or China's influence in Central Asia (Koch 2013), Kazakhstan's relations with and diplomatic moves in the Islamic world or interactions with Türkiye are not well-covered, and this is overall a neglected field of research. Additionally, the study of Central Asian regionalism then diverts back towards the first vector and becomes a study of Russian influence (e.g. Anceschi 2022; Buranelli 2018; Cooley 2014). As such, treated in isolation, these do not contribute to the concept of multi-vector foreign policy as they are treated as their own phenomena, and not

a part of a broader strategy. Thus, Kazakhstan's non-Russian and non-Western relations are either amalgamated into one unwieldy analysis or examined as isolated phenomena.

In conclusion, this thesis hopes to build on existing frameworks by highlighting the negotiation of regional power in Central Asia beyond Russia, and specifically engage a discursive framework to explore how this is achieved through the construction of geopolitical space. It engages the discursive approach of Critical Geopolitics to problematise the perception of regional space as constructed in Kazakhstani discourse. This approach counters the trends in International Relations research to focus on the interests of bigger powers, and provides a local focus on the perspective of Kazakhstan. Additionally, engaging in an analysis of discursive practice, the thesis avoids taking economic dependencies for granted and explores how these international connections and policy decisions are justified by the political elite as they pursue their own independent interests. By exploring these discursive constructions therefore, and the way they contextualise Kazakhstan's external relations, a picture of Kazakhstan's region is developed which indicate its activity in negotiating the role of regional hegemons.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Having established the frame of reference for this study of Kazakhstani foreign policy within the field of Critical Geopolitics, this chapter is comprised of two sections which outline the methodological framework on which this paper is based. The first section builds on the introduction to Critical Geopolitics in the previous chapter to outline the chosen method of Critical Discourse Analysis. This section explains the choice of method and the process of analysis, before the second section explains how sources were collected for analysis and presents an overview of the arrangement of the following chapters.

Discourse Analysis

The critical nature of Critical Geopolitics designates an effort to deconstruct the way in which space is ordered, and hence suggests employing Discourse Analysis as the method of data analysis. As explored earlier, this theoretical background lends itself to an analysis of the discourse practices which contribute to the delineation of regionalisms. This project follows in particular Critical Discourse Analysis in its examination of the selected sources. Fairclough argues that the critical aspect of Critical Discourse Analysis comes from its focus on exploring social wrongs, “analysing their sources and causes, resistance to them and possibilities of overcoming them” (2010, 231). The understanding is that discourses work to naturalise the status quo through the propagation of common meaning which constructs a particular understanding of how the world is and why it implicitly must be so. In this way, social wrongs are constructed as part of the social system and reinforced by discourses which create and maintain them. Critical Discourse Analysis as a critical field is concerned with the deconstruction of this process, understanding the differing perspectives and narrative competition which creates room for agency and change. Within the framework of Critical Geopolitics, also a critical field, the social wrong as such is the unequal power relations which naturalise the hegemony of great powers. The aim of the thesis is to explore how these unequal relations are constructed and arranged in Kazakhstani discourse, noting how the presentation and maintenance of these relations in discourse contributes to their reproduction, presents instances of resistance, and proposes possible paths to change them. This forms the basis of the negotiation of regional hegemony, where negotiation is a dual process of acceptance and resistance to various external influences through both practices and discourse.

Practically, discourses have a number of operationalisations which can be examined through discourse analysis. Fairclough identifies three practical outcomes of discourse operationalisation: enactment, inculcation, and physical materialisation (Fairclough 2010, 233). Through these, discourses introduce new ways of interacting, being, and organising space, respectively (Fairclough 2010, 233). In the context of this thesis, the argument is that discourses of regionalisms do all three: firstly, they organise space in a particular way. While geography cannot be physically changed, there is a discursive creation of regions which acts to define belonging in a defined space. Having created these spaces, regional organisational frameworks provide normative guidelines for the roles and behaviours of actors, enacting certain rules of interaction. Finally, these may in extreme cases extend to changing the self-identification of a state, inculcating new beliefs about itself and its role in the world. As such, this approach envisages an exploration of regional discourses in Kazakhstan, and the implications of this for the interactions between actors.

In the context of this thesis, discourses are understood as overarching definitions of a region. Regions are not determined spaces, but are constructed out of actors, roles, and interests. In this sense, a discourse on a region is a particular definition and meaning ascribed to a region. The micro-level definition is done by narratives which bestow actors with particular attributes which then function within the discourse to position them. For example, considering Eurasia, various discourses define the region in different ways, including different actors and to different ends. One discourse may align to a cultural definition of Eurasia, while another may focus on the political definition. With these, narratives describe the relationship between the actors, implying expectations of their roles and behaviours. For example, narratives of centrality prioritise the position of Kazakhstan within Eurasia, defining it as an integral part of regional processes, and shifting other actors to the Eurasian periphery.

The biggest limitation of discourse is the disconnect between words and actions, or in other words, there is an interpretive process to justify the relationship between the discourses and reality. In the context of foreign policy, a high presence of a particular country in Kazakhstani discourse does not necessitate close or strong bilateral relations. Here it is important to consider a few things in tandem. As discussed with the example of Ambrosio and Lange (2014), more detail is required than simply recognising which countries are referred to in order to understand why they feature so heavily. Secondly, their prevalence in

Kazakhstani foreign policy discourse may not be related to bilateral ties themselves, in which case the argument being made is much broader than simply an example of crucial bilateral relations. Considering again Afghanistan from Ambrosio and Lange (2014), the context in which Afghanistan is present – related to the war launched by the USA in a global drive against terrorism – relates to many various issues, including terrorism, regional security, and Western intervention, which may be of more importance to Kazakhstan than the country of Afghanistan itself. Therefore, conducted properly and with measured claims, this disconnect between words and actions is not a fatal flaw. Where this thesis considers what appears as bilateral relations – be it with Afghanistan, China, or Singapore – the focus is on the discursive themes which emerge. The argument that follows is that these themes construct Kazakhstani perspectives of its region and international politics, and as such act to delimit the role of external actors. This thesis does not argue, for example, that the discursive themes reflect the centrality of Singapore to Kazakhstan’s global strategy. As such, the prevalence of a particular actor in Kazakhstani discourse is not a reflection of the practical state of relations per se, but should instead be read as evidence of the efforts of the Kazakh elites to construct a particular vision of their region, and by extension negotiate Kazakhstan’s position in relation to larger regional powers.

Source Selection

As its sources for discourse analysis, this project selects a series of Kazakhstani foreign policy texts, including official publications such as foreign policy concepts; speeches by preeminent government officials; and opinion pieces and editorials published in various media outlets from 2011 until January 2023. As a collection, these sources are drawn from a variety of speakers, both governmental and analytical figures; and target a variety of audiences: domestic, regional, and international. This allows for a broader perspective of the discourses and their different facets. This aligns with the general framework of discourse analysis as governmental speech acts are made on behalf of a formal authority and are expected to represent a clear articulation of their position (Hansen 2006, 76). Additionally, by using a breadth of texts, their impact can be shown by a certain level of intertextuality and cross-referencing, for example Kolpakov’s (2011a; 2011c) comments on Nazarbayev’s (2011a) and Putin’s (2011) infamous *Izvestia* articles on Eurasian integration. This also deepens the analysis by providing not just different but also opposing or critical perspectives of other texts.

During the research process, a number of issues were identified which impact the presentation of the analysis. Firstly, there is the obvious challenge of covering a time span of 32 years, even if this is not conducted strictly year-by-year. There are two additional problems affecting the research of the earlier post-Soviet years. Namely, given the time elapsed, the majority of the research on Kazakhstan has already examined these earlier periods in depth. In comparison, more recent events have not had the luxury of decades of academic study. Secondly, digital media outlets vary in the length of their archives, and accessible digitalisations of the original papers from the 1990s are difficult to access. As such, this thesis takes sources and begins its analysis from 2011 when Eurasian integration was given new wind with the institutionalisation of the contemporary EAEU, and continuing until 2023 in order to capture more recent developments. 2011 is an important starting date as the new impetus behind institutionalisation also captures the conflicting visions of Eurasian integration, with the publication of articles in *Izvestia* by Lukashenko (2011), Nazarbayev (2011a), and Putin (2011), and with the introduction of Western sanctions against Russia shortly thereafter, in response to its annexation of Crimea, which put a strain on the newly formed institutions. As such, this timeframe captures the most important and relatively recent developments in Kazakhstan's foreign policy.

Governmental sources were collected by a variety of methods. Firstly, a simple search of legal acts was conducted to find and access foreign policy concepts produced by the government (Decree No. 741 2014; Decree No. 280 2020). For presidential sources, the presidential website, *Akorda*, contains a collection of speeches. This was searched manually for speeches related to regional initiatives. Sources pulled from this site were analysed in a combination of English and Russian. The website is available in English, Kazakh, and Russian, however there is more content available in Kazakh and Russian than in English. As such, the search was conducted first in English, and then in Russian, so if an English-language version was available this was used, otherwise the source was used in Russian. Nazarbayev's (2011a) infamous article published in *Izvestia* was included *ad hoc*, having being discovered through secondary literature which provided an overview of the seminal texts of Eurasian integration, given that it otherwise would have fallen outside the data collection methods, but whose inclusion is rather central to the purposes of the study.

For media outlets, outlets were first identified using media overviews from the Davis Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies (n.d.) and the BBC (2023). As a rule, internationally based or supported outlets, such as *Azattyq*, the Kazakhstani branch of Radio Free Europe, were avoided as their editorial line may differ significantly from that of a Kazakhstani outlet. In the end, three outlets were selected for analysis: the *Astana Times*, *Tengrinews*, and *Zakon*.

As an ensemble, these represent a variety of Kazakhstani outlets. The *Astana Times* and *Zakon* represent more of an elite perspective, while *Tengrinews* is a general outlet. Published in English, the *Astana Times* is not intended for domestic consumption, but it does represent a platform for the Kazakhstani elite to engage in a negotiation of its international role and identity. Given that this is not primarily a domestic outlet, careful attention was paid to the authors, more so than with other outlets as it is an international English-language publication and not directly involved in domestic discourse. However, it remains a valuable source of data given the international promotion of Kazakhstan's priorities by Kazakhstani elite. To supplement this, *Zakon* was also selected as a more domestically orientated elite perspective. Conversely, as a general outlet, *Tengrinews* collates a greater variety of topics and perspectives from a more general standpoint. While these are not the largest media outlets in Kazakhstan, these were chosen based on their representation of different perspectives, the elite and the more general. Larger outlets such as *Kazakhstanskaya Pravda* were excluded because, as state-affiliated media, they function as official outlets, but for this research the official governmental perspective and policy is already covered by the presidential speeches and foreign policy concepts. As such, the selected outlets provide better balance and variety.

In order to find relevant sources, the 'Op-ed' sections of all outlets were manually searched for articles containing international content, with a particular focus on Central Asian and Eurasian regionalism. Additionally, across all outlets a preference was held for articles published by Kazakhstani authors. As such, articles which discussed regionalism, but which were the opinions of foreign officials, regardless of their connection to Kazakhstan, were excluded from the data as while they engage in regionalism debate, they do not represent Kazakhstani discourse. However, when engaging with media and journalists, an exception was made for journalists reporting in national outlets as their interest is not that of another state,

and they are assumed to be more knowledgeable about and better reflect the Kazakhstani milieu.

Combined with the governmental sources, in total 103 sources were analysed, comprised of 2 foreign policy concepts, 14 Presidential addresses, 40 articles from the *Astana Times*, 31 from *Tengrinews*, and 16 from *Zakon*, as well as finally the inclusion of Nazarbayev's (2011a) article in *Izvestia*.

Having collected and analysed the sources, in the presentation of this analysis, the following chapters take a thematic approach, responding to the emergence of particular geopolitical spaces in Kazakhstani discourse. As such, Chapters 4 and 5 respectively cover the two major spaces: Eurasia and Asia. Within each chapter, further sections dissect the different ways in which these broad spaces are arranged and rearranged to prioritise certain actors. Considering Eurasia, Chapter 4 covers Eurasian integration, relations with Russia, Central Asia, and the broader CIS space. In the case of Asia, Chapter 5 covers a wider range of regional organisation, considering individual actors such as China and Singapore, as well as the role of regional actors and their sub-regions including India, Iran, and Türkiye across the Middle East and South Asia.

Chapter 4: Eurasia and its discontents

This chapter explores Kazakhstani discourse pertaining broadly to Eurasia, and to the post-Soviet space in particular. The central aim of this chapter is to problematise the role assigned to Russia in various regional arrangements and explore the other relationships Kazakhstan has developed in the region and their presented role in Kazakhstan's foreign outlook. The chapter is divided into four sections which each cover a different vector of Kazakhstani relations.

The first section explores Eurasian integration understood in its most evident meaning, exploring links to the ideology of Eurasianism and institutions such as the EAEU and the central role usually assigned to Russia in the Eurasian space. The second section narrows the Eurasian focus to Central Asian regionalism, explaining the importance of Central Asia as a regional construct in Kazakhstani foreign policy, acting as a counterweight within the CIS space against Russian influence. The third section examines Kazakhstan's relationship with Europe and Western institutions, exploring specifically how Kazakhstan constructs and perceives the West as a broad category and the implications this has in the international geopolitical context. The final section of this chapter concludes by bringing these previous sections together in a much broader look at the CIS space, exploring post-Soviet initiatives, and the Kazakhstani interpretation of key events including the CSTO intervention in Kazakhstan and the various events concerning Ukraine, from Euromaidan in 2013 to the full-scale war Russia launched in 2022. This demonstrates the varying definitions the CIS and Eurasian spaces are subject to, and how Kazakhstan has activated these definitions in its response to emerging challenges in these spaces as global geopolitical tensions have mounted and fuelled conflict across the Eurasian continent.

[New and improved: Kazakhstani Eurasianism](#)

This section dissects Eurasian integration and explores the Kazakhstani understanding of Eurasia. It covers three major themes which comprise an overview of Kazakhstan-Russia relations, the construction of Kazakhstan's identity as a Eurasian country, and the discursive construction of Eurasia itself. The section begins by specifically examining the way in which Russia is present in Kazakhstani rhetoric, how it is presented, and the value ascribed to it. It then turns to Kazakhstan itself and demonstrates how discourses of Eurasia are applied to Kazakhstani identity, thus creating room for Kazakhstani independence and autonomy in the

broader Eurasian geographical space. Finally, these two themes are drawn together by a deeper examination of the discourses on Eurasia, specifically its definition as a civilisational identity. This definition thus complements the previous themes by highlighting how Russia is not considered the primary Eurasian state, and how Kazakhstan elevates its own position in Eurasia in order to assert its independence and autonomy.

Despite their close involvement in Eurasian integration, the representation of the Kazakh-Russian relationship maintains a strong differentiation between the two countries which acts to limit the depth of Russia's influence in Central Asia. In an article for *Zakon*, political scientist Adil Kaukenov's (2022b) overview of Kazakhstan-Russia relations attempts to draw long historical link between Kazakhstan and Russia, but it portrays a parallel rather than combined history. The article shies away from the political, focusing instead on an almost fantastical historical and cultural narrative. For example, as evidence of the "Kazakh-Russian friendship", he evokes the "strong brotherly relations between... Shoqan Walikhanov and... Dostoyevsky" (Kaukenov 2022b). Rather than trying to convince the reader of the value of Russian culture to Kazakhstan, the article's main perspective is the contribution of Kazakhstan to the development of Russian literature and, as in the example of Walikhanov, to connote the existence of a Kazakh literary culture on par with that of Russia through the equivalent connection to Dostoyevsky. Rather than sharing in a cultural history, each country is presented as having its own rich historical narrative which has developed through dialogue with the other.

This kind of social differentiation acts to portray Eurasia as a plural space, rather than a united space. References to Eurasian integration often refer to "our peoples" (e.g. Mami 2013; Nazarbayev 2011a; 2014a; 2014b), engaging in a deliberate social differentiation between Kazakhstan and Russia. This is a response to the perception that Russia continues to have designs on Kazakhstan. Critic Alexander Kolpakov "suspected [Putin] of badly hidden imperial ambitions" (2011a), and Kazakh academic Chokan Laumulin asserting that "the Russian ethnos has never existed outside the context of imperialism" (Laumulin 2014c), highlighting the difficult commitment of Kazakhstan to its deep relationship with Russia. This exemplifies negotiation by reframing the relationship between Russia and Kazakhstan away from the political towards the social. By rejecting narratives of political history, which would necessarily identify Russia as the centre of the Eurasian space – whether during the Russian

Empire or the times of the USSR – social and cultural narratives emphasise a fundamental difference between Kazakhstan and Russia. In this context, an acknowledgement is made of the close history of the two countries, but a distinct line is drawn which defines the limit of Russia's political and cultural influence, as Kazakhstan and Russia are represented as two different countries and cultures belonging to the shared Eurasian space, rather than one belonging to the cultural world of the other.

The economic cooperation of the EAEU is the most prominent example of attempted integration between the two countries, yet even this demonstrates limits of Russian influence. While in an article for *Astana Times*, then-Chairman of the Senate of the Parliament of Kazakhstan Kairat Mami acknowledges that “Kazakh-Russian relations have been one of the pillars of the integration process from the moment the Soviet Union collapsed” (2013), he also emphasises the EAEU not as an end in and of itself, but is a pathway towards better integration into the global economy, writing, “the alternative to integration is isolation. You cannot profitably integrate into the world market without being a full member of the regional market” (Mami 2013). This justification is also laid out by then Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan Samat Ordabayev who in an article in *Astana Times* argues that the EAEU should provide outcomes which “strengthen each nation's competitiveness in the global economy” and “further [promote] our respective countries' strong positions in the global economy” (Ordabayev 2014). In this context, the presented justification for deeper integration is Kazakhstan's individual economic development, rather than any predetermined importance of the Kazakhstan-Russia relationship.

While Kazakhstan takes pride in Nazarbayev's role as the father of Eurasian integration, there is increasing hesitancy to commit to full integration. Where Nazarbayev once campaigned to maintain a common currency to prevent economic troubles following the dissolution of the USSR (Anceschi 2022, 18-23), now in Kazakhstan there is the view that a single currency for the EAEU would be a step too far away from national sovereignty (e.g. Kolpakov 2011a; Khudaibergenov 2015; Krivosheev 2019). While Kolpakov derides Putin's “inevitable move towards a single national currency” as “a direct threat to the sovereignty of states” (2011a). In contrast, he argues that Nazarbayev's (2011a) proposal of a common “reserve and unit of account are far from a single currency” (Kolpakov 2011c). Nazarbayev himself draws a connection between his proposal and the European Currency Unit, not the

Euro itself (2011b). Once again, there is evidence of negotiation as Kazakhstan commits to Eurasian integration as a pathway of better access to the global economy, tying itself to the Russian economy in the process, but also taking an active role in defining the limits of the integration process.

In defining the Eurasian space beyond the economic relations, Kazakhstani voices differ on their presentation of the location of Russia, thereby precluding its full engagement and role in the Eurasian space. For example, while providing an overview of the G20 nations for *Zakon*, political scientist Mara Gubaydullina excludes Russia from “the two most represented regions – Europe... and Asia... and also the influential American vector” (2022) to instead relegate it to the same level as stand-alone “leaders... Australia and [South Africa]” (Gubaydullina 2022). This is interesting as not only is Russia neither European nor Asian, it also does not feature as a global power alongside the USA and Canada. Writing for *Astana Times*, journalist Dmitry Babich (2021) uses an interesting turn of phrase to refer to Russia as Europe’s “Eurasian eastern extension”. While this does not go so far as to firmly insert Russia into the category of Europe, it also excludes Russia from being a purely Eurasian state, arguing that Russia exists as an attachment to Europe rather than a full part of the Eurasian space that Kazakhstan occupies. In this context, there is a clear narrative which is reticent to endow Russia with a powerful role in the Eurasian space. Russia is an unavoidable, large, important market, but this is undermined by the social differentiation between Russia and Kazakhstan, Kazakhstan’s self-imposed limits on the depth of Eurasian integration, and the ambiguous position of Russia in the world. It is not a country which belongs decidedly to the Eurasian space, and therefore its and Kazakhstan’s interests in the development of EAEU integration differ.

Kazakhstan’s conception of the Eurasian space relies on a narrative of centrality which embed Kazakhstan into Eurasia to the detriment of Russia who is left on the periphery. When attempting to define Eurasia, it is important to note two differing conceptions of Eurasia. The first is an independent space between Europe and Asia, and the other is as a combination or meeting-point of the two. For itself, Kazakhstan largely avoids this latter interpretation as this implies strong links to both Europe and Asia. Kazakhstan instead prefers to promote itself as independent of both these spheres and engaged in its own political and cultural continental space. In order to do this, it activates various narratives of bridges, describing Kazakhstan

variously as “a powerful bridge between Europe, its Eurasian eastern extension named Russia – and China” (Babich 2021), “a geo-economic bridge between East and West, Europe and Asia” (Nazarbayev 2014a). The other major narrative is one of centrality, with Kazakhstan “situated in the heart of the Eurasian continent... [connecting] the markets of China, Europe, Russia and the CIS countries” (Sabayeva 2015). This creates a sense of an independent Eurasia, with Kazakhstan placed at its centre. This narrative does not leave room for Russia to act as a hegemon as Kazakhstan is portrayed as playing a pivotal role in Eurasia.

As Kazakhstan does not commit to being part of Europe or Asia and instead invests in the idea of a separate Eurasia, the question then naturally arises, as a distinct space, what exactly defines Eurasia? Kazakhstani discourse tends towards a value-based civilisational definition of Eurasia. Mami proclaims: “Eurasian integration has a special conceptual meaning for Kazakhstan... The system of peacekeeping attitudes, social values based on respect, cooperation and mutual enrichment of cultures are the principles of integration” (2013). This reading highlights the idea of Eurasia as a comprised of plurals: a plurality of countries, peoples, and cultures. In this context, the link between these diverse groups is a set of common values, which essentially boil down to respect for each other’s differences. This is also evident by Nazarbayev, who prioritises “the principles of voluntariness, equality, mutual benefit and consideration of the pragmatic interests” (2014a). This positions Eurasia as a distinct set of values, which then limit the potential of Russia to act as a hegemon by creating a specific definition of Eurasia. Explicitly, “the process of cultural and humanitarian integration does not blur the spiritual and cultural diversity of the Eurasian space by dominating one single segment” (Nazarbayev 2014a). This emphasis on diversity gives Kazakhstan yet another claim to its status as the premier Eurasian state, given its own multi-ethnic character and relative peacefulness compared to the rest of the region. This once again affirms Kazakhstan’s place in the Eurasian space and prevents Russia from claiming to be premier Eurasian state.

In summary, with this sufficiently broad value-based definition of Eurasia, no single state can really claim to be Eurasian par excellence as it does not promote one political system or culture, but rather celebrates difference. This means that Kazakhstan at once is able to prevent itself falling back under Russian hegemony by presenting the Eurasian space as one defined by differences, not commonality. In this space, there is ample room then for

Kazakhstan to openly express its differing interests. In this process Kazakhstan is actively engaged in a process of negotiation which sees a particular role assigned to Russia as an important regional partner, but the discursive construction of the Eurasian space through narratives of centrality and bridges asserts the sovereignty and independence of Kazakhstan.

First among equals: Kazakhstan and Central Asian regionalism

While the Eurasian space, through initiatives such as the EAEU, appears as the most prevalent important region for Kazakhstan, significant emphasis is placed on Central Asian integration within Eurasia. This section explores the way this regionalism is operationalised in Kazakhstani discourse. It covers firstly the construction and justification of Central Asia itself, as a response to external influence, specifically against Russian imperialism. Finally, it explores how Kazakhstan places itself at the head of this regional hierarchy.

Central Asian regionalism is primarily constructed as a necessary first step allowing the Central Asian states to pursue more cohesive and empowered foreign policy. Political scientist and politician Erlan Karin laments that while “there are several institutions of regional security in the region... there are no regional cooperation programmes in the field of security among the countries of the region” (Karin 2014). Essentially, many regional organisations may cover the region and address various issues in the region, but between the Central Asian states themselves there is not much effective cooperation. In a political sense, the situation is worse, as

“the Central Asian region is beginning to unravel geopolitically... Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan are being increasingly drawn in to the orbit of the political and military influence of Russia. Uzbekistan is developing military cooperation with the [USA]... the expansion of military cooperation of Central Asian countries with different geopolitical centres makes them even more intractable on intraregional issues, as each party counts upon the help of its own “Big Brother”” (Karin 2014)

With these dynamics in mind, there is a clear threat of the splintering of the region at the whim of international trends, threatening Kazakhstan’s stability. As such, regional cooperation is presented first and foremost as a necessary foreign policy tool to counter external threats. However, in the specific case of Central Asia, these threats can be specifically narrowed down to external powers. While Kaukenov is quick to point out that “sometimes Central Asian cooperation is interpreted as an attempt to create an alliance against somebody. For example, against Russia” (2018c), he argues that it should not be openly

interpreted as such, as “Central Asian countries need a mutual forum only with each other, without inviting “great powers”” (2018c), which as a broader statement applies also to the USA and China. The underlying thread which ties Central Asian states together therefore is their not being great powers. There is a demonstrated understanding of the competitive geopolitical environment, and the risk to the Central Asian states as small states. In this sense, the region is endowed with meaning as a negotiating tool against external influence.

Despite a broad interest in curtailing external influence, in the construction of Central Asia particular attention is paid to the common interest of Central Asian states in avoiding Russian imperialism in the region. In an article for *Tengrinews*, economist Rakhym Oshakbayev (2016) critiques an article from *Lenta* which arguably demonstrates Russia’s imperialist view of the region. He decries the incorrect use in the original article of Soviet formulas *Kirgiziya* instead of Kyrgyzstan, and *Srednaya Aziya* instead of Central Asia (Oshakbayev 2016). This imperialist view is also aptly demonstrated by the attached image of a donkey and an old-fashioned cart, “apparently intended to illustrate the level of development” in Central Asia (Oshakbayev 2016). In relation to Kazakhstan, he calls out the binary with-or-against-us “Soviet logic” (Oshakbayev 2016) which criticises Kazakhstan for pursuing balanced international relations, compared to Kyrgyzstan’s unwavering support for Moscow which, in the words of the *Lenta* article, “demonstrated the stability of Moscow’s position in the region” (Lenta.ru 2016, cited in Oshakbayev 2016). Clearly, Russia only looks out for Russia’s interest, and that interest is influence. While Central Asia cannot escape Russia, this demonstrates a strong sense of regional solidarity. While the *Lenta* article aims to draw an unfavourable comparison between Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, critiquing the former and praising the latter, Oshakbayev’s focus on the defence of Kyrgyzstan and critique of the Russian perspective rather than defending Kazakhstan’s policy to the detriment of the independent policy choices of the other Central Asian states demonstrates the priority given to establishing Central Asian solidarity. This also means that Central Asia is not a region constructed on likeness – there is an accepted difference in the political interests of each of the participating states. Sovereignty and independence are respected, so the region is defined by its facing a common external threat.

Furthermore, the political differences between the Central Asian states contribute to Kazakhstan’s designation as the leader of Central Asian integration. Considering the fractured

geopolitical landscape, with Uzbekistan tending towards the USA, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan falling under Russia's thumb, and Turkmenistan committed at the time to passive neutrality, Kazakhstan's active multi-vector foreign policy lends it the claim to be the state to unite Central Asia. Not only is Kazakhstan at the centre of Eurasia, but it is also promoted as being "located in the centre of Central Asia" (Idrissov 2014a). This centrality does not speak to a geographical fact, but rather to a more intangible sense of Central Asian-ness. If the other republics are aligning themselves to various competing powers, it is in the name of protecting their independence and sovereignty, as is their right to do. In Kazakhstan, however, sovereignty is not defined by a regional hegemon acting as a guarantor, but by a balanced multi-vector foreign policy. As such, Kazakhstan is the most Central Asian state because it is the state which believes in and indeed needs Central Asia to exist as a region. If this core follows the rules of a divided world, then Kazakhstan loses by virtue of not having an external guarantor. In this context, Kazakhstan's promotion of Central Asian regionalism is not a reflection necessarily of an objective reality of a cohesive region, but rather an active process of trying to create this region, as an exclusive region independent of the hegemony of Moscow.

To summarise, the Central Asian region constitutes the core of Kazakhstani foreign policy and its broader perspective of the world. Excluding all major players, the five Central Asian republics find themselves largely equal, and it is argued that effective cooperation between them can act as a buffer against the regional hegemony of Russia and other great powers as they develop coordinated positions and promote their own interests in the face of the geopolitical great power challenge. Nevertheless, despite this enthusiastic prognosis, each republic is driven by its own interests, and the particular regional focus of Kazakhstan is driven by its multi-vector foreign policy, which sees it actively seeking to avoid a regional hegemony. In this way, the discursive construction of the Central Asian space is a key process of the Kazakh elite as without this region being accepted as a reality, they lose negotiating power against external influence. Within the frame of a multi-vector foreign policy, there is not the option of investing in Kazakhstani security and stability by means of an external guarantor.

Towards the sunset: Kazakhstan, Europe, and the West

This section explores the discursive representation of Kazakhstan's relations with Western countries and institutions. In the first instance, a heavy emphasis is placed on Kazakhstan's successful integration with Western and international organisations as a part of its multi-vector foreign policy. The EU in particular emerges as a strong partner of Kazakhstan. However, with the advent of growing tensions from 2013 between Russia and the West, the West as a bloc is viewed more negatively, which requires careful rhetorical differentiation between individual countries and the global or regional alignments. In this way, while Kazakhstan exhibits an eagerness to maintain balanced relations, it has also more recently exhibited a careful distance from institutions that are too Western as opposed to specifically European.

Beyond the regional integration process, Kazakhstan's greatest pride is in its accession to international Western-led organisations. Kazakhstan's 2010 chairmanship of the OSCE is particularly celebrated as an example of "chairmanship on authoritative platforms" (Akylbayev 2021), which contributes both to the acceptance of Kazakhstan as an international actor, and to Kazakhstan's ability to speak on behalf of Central Asia. Similarly, Kazakhstan's accession to the World Trade Organisation (WTO) is an example of its commitment to global values of free trade. By engaging with these platforms, Kazakhstan demonstrates a certain affinity with the values that they espouse. It places itself comfortably within this broader sphere of Western norms. Of particular note is that "Kazakhstan became a member of the [WTO], combining the requirements of the WTO, the Customs Union and the [EAEU]" (Borbasov 2018). This highlights that these international objectives should not stand in the way of regional initiatives and in fact serve to strengthen them by providing a base set of rules. This can be considered as an example of negotiation as the basis for the regional initiatives come not from either in Russia or Kazakhstan, but rather from the broader notions of international, primarily Western, norms. In this sense, Russia's role as a power in these regional structures is curtailed by international norms, be they the economic rules of the WTO or the respect for sovereignty agreed by the United Nations. Kazakhstan positions regional initiatives as part of a broader international context, thereby setting a path for their development which precludes their acting as a vassal for hegemonic power.

Europe in particular is represented as a model of the potential of regional integration and a positive influence on Kazakhstan. Indeed, Kazakhstan is proud to be the only country of the CIS space to have an Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement with the EU (Borbasov 2018; Kaukenov 2016). This demonstrates Kazakhstan's openness and multi-vector foreign policy in comparison with the other republics of Central Asia whose allegiances are rather defined in more binary geopolitical terms, as explored earlier. This is particularly important as it implies a distinction between engagement with Europe and the influence of the USA. This creates a division in broader notions of the West, which is discussed further on. On the specifics of Europe, beyond bilateral engagement, Kazakhstan also envisages "creating a free trade area between the EU and the EAEU" (Li 2015). This contributes both to the formalisation of the EAEU as a competent international actor and the setting of a standard of development for it to follow. The EAEU is inspired by the EU experience and benefits it can offer, as Tokayev acknowledges "the potential of the EU cannot be understated; it will be able to overcome predicaments since the EU is still attractive to its members and outsiders as an evolving institution" (2016). Idea of attractivity implies that the EAEU is not a certainty. Tokayev is arguing that the EAEU must continue to prove its worth for its members, which is obviously contrary to ideas that it functions as a simple vehicle of Russian influence. As such, EU successes need to be replicated in the EAEU, as:

"with the formation of the [EU], [citizens] obtained the right to visa-free travel to neighbouring countries. All EU countries raised social standards of living, increased the level of remuneration, reduced administrative arbitrariness and enshrined many social achievements in law. Today, this is a powerful incentive to attract new states to the EU. Therefore, ordinary citizens ask: how do we benefit from joining the [EAEU] and what should we expect in this regard?" (Sagindikov 2014)

Similarly, within the EU, countries

"get access to better institutions and better regulation, as well as rule of law and low level of corruption. Therefore, the only reliable way to make Eurasian integration attractive, is to dramatically and fundamentally improve the quality of supranational regulation, make it very comfortable for business, investment and entrepreneurial activity, and really take into account the national economic interests of the parties in decision making" (Usmanova 2014)

By continually holding the EU as an example, Kazakhstan not only indicates its openness to cooperation with the Western partners, but also sets standards for the

development of the EAEU. By setting such standards, Kazakhstan avoids the EAEU becoming merely a vehicle of Russian hegemony by constructing the Eurasian organisation as an uncertain development in need of justification. This means that it is able to argue for the extraction of benefits, negotiating its participation in the EAEU on economic outcomes rather than political alignment. In this design, Russia's regional hegemony in Central Asia is balanced by the demand to achieve economic outcomes for Central Asian citizens, outcomes based on EU standards which are defined by the lack of a single European hegemon. In this way, the rhetorical links between the EAEU and the EU, and links between Kazakhstan and Europe more generally, contribute to Kazakhstan's efforts to manage Russia's presence in Central Asia.

Against the background of increasing tensions between Russia and the West, the image of the West has suffered in Kazakhstan. Carefully worded statements to express that "Russia and Western states initiated cut-backs in economic ties across a big sector" (Kaukenov 2016) are rare. Generally, the rhetoric is more explicit in blaming the West for the "politicisation of economic cooperation (Kaukenov 2016) which resulted in "economic sanctions against Russia from the side of the West" (Amrebayev 2023), even going so far as to identifying this behaviour as having "caused tension in the relations between Russia and the West" (Tokayev 2016). As such, many sources point to the "anti-Russia sanctions" (Kaukenov 2022a; 2022d) of the West as a form of conflict, with various references to a "sanctions standoff" (Decree No. 280 2020), a "sanctions fight" (Kaukenov 2022d), and "sanctions wars" (Nazarbayev 2018; 2019; Tokayev 2022b). This creates the impression that it is mainly the West who is to blame for the uneasy global atmosphere. It is easy to initially read these as Kazakhstan's alignment with Russia's position, however in the context of Kazakhstan's multi-vector foreign policy, this is an unlikely position to take. First of all, Russia does not escape critique, and secondly, there is an absence of more mainstream Russian narratives. The dispute between Russia and the West is a geopolitical one, a dispute between great powers, and therefore a dispute to which Kazakhstan is not a party. It reserves some distance from the conflict. In this sense, its association with Russia is more implicit, and based on an accepted previously established relations with Russia, rather than an endorsement of the latter's current policy. In this way, Kazakhstani voices avoid taking either side, rather falling back on the common narrative against geopolitical conflict, given the impact this has

on small states, and Kazakhstan's accepted pragmatic and non-aligned multi-vector foreign policy.

Considering the entrance of the West as an actor, it is important to consider how exactly the West is defined in Kazakhstan. Overall, notions of the West centre on the USA as the problematic party. Tokayev explicitly points the finger at "the West, first of all, the [USA]" (2016), and Laumulin is particularly critical of what he sees as American imperialism, describing NATO bases in Europe as "American "occupation" bases" (2013a). Laumulin also believes that the USA is "forcing a stubborn Europe to adopt" (2014b) the sanctions against Russia, which demonstrates a distinction between Europe and America in the understanding of the West. In this context, the West is a geopolitical concept and acts as a stand-in for the USA in the global game between it and Russia. The impact of this is that the USA avoids direct blame, and it is viewed as having broader although not clearly defined support.

This broad notion of the West does not totally shield Europe from critique. Laumulin foresees some European interference in Central Asia, as "Europe will not settle for the role of a passive observer in the Eurasian theatre" (2013a), and also argues that "the main "instigator" of [tectonic shifts in the international scene] is the progressing emergence of a European superstate" (2013b). However, Laumulin's texts should be read with some caution. Firstly, they are intended as political analyses of the evolving tensions between Russia and the West, so they are naturally going to be more explicit in their content than measured governmental output. Equally, it should be noted that once again while there is critique of Europe, this does not automatically align to Russian narratives. For example, his critique focusses on Europe as a geopolitical force and does not engage with cultural competition such as the Russian construction of *Gayropa* (Foxall 2019). In this sense, his critique recalls the familiar Kazakhstani narratives against great power competition and cannot represent a binary choice to reject Europe and embrace Russia.

In conclusion, Kazakhstan has a difficult relationship with the West, broadly speaking. In the first instance, the West appears as a broad overarching concept which encapsulates a particular view of the world as one of bloc competition. Below this global story however, Kazakhstan maintains the importance of Western norms and institutions as factors of stability in the construction Eurasian institutions. Kazakhstan openly positions itself within the global Western order, accepting that these norms can act as a buffer against Russian hegemony in

Central Asia. However, Kazakhstan avoids positioning itself as a part of Europe or the West, mindful of its multi-vector foreign policy, and the deteriorating geopolitical conflict. In this sense, reticence to embrace the West is not analogous to embracing Russia's position in this conflict. The careful rhetorical distinction between the West and the EU, and the role that the EU is afforded as a model for the EAEU, combined with an absence of Russian narratives demonstrate continued efforts to negotiate Russian hegemony in Central Asia.

Understanding the post-Soviet: the CIS and the question of Ukraine

Having covered Eurasian integration with a focus on Russia and Central Asia, and having started to discuss the tensions between Russia and the West, this section covers the broader region of the post-Soviet space and specifically the problems which have evolved with the situation in Ukraine from 2013 onwards. The section begins by trying to get a grasp on what now constitutes the post-Soviet space. With the independent republics covering various sub-regions and pursuing their own politics, there is not an easy way to group them together. Nevertheless, the CIS has emerged as the preferred Kazakhstani shorthand for the post-Soviet republics. This section also then explores the CSTO and its intervention against the Qandy qañtar protests. After exploring these dynamics, this section moves on to discuss the problems posed by Ukraine, before finally specifically addressing what this means for Kazakhstan and its definition of geopolitical space.

Despite the turmoil in many republics following the dissolution of the USSR and their subsequent divergent paths, the diverse space maintains a certain coherence in Kazakhstani discourse. The foreign policy concept of 2014 specifically describes "traditional and mutual cooperation" (Decree No. 741 2014) between the post-Soviet nations, differentiating this group of countries from Kazakhstan's other regionally grouped relations. In an article for *Tengrinews*, political scientist Anton Bugayenko claims that "after the fall of the USSR, positively... the states were ready to listen to each other and take into account mutual interests" (2018), indicating the view that the collapse of the former Union should not necessitate negative relations between the newly independent republics. There is even a level of tolerance for differences of opinion, as Mami acknowledges "lively debate about the direction and the nature of integration exists in Belarus and Ukraine, Kyrgyzstan and other CIS countries" (2013). While this does not necessitate that all republics should unquestioningly engage in Eurasian integration, it does carry the implication that they still exist as a distinct

grouping who are covered by the scope of Eurasian integration. As such, they should all carefully consider the opportunity, as Laumulin notes: “Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan have received the status of observers in the Customs Union... [they] did not arrive easily, but due to different reasons” (2013a). As such, the relations between the countries have been preserved as a sort of regional grouping but have been redefined away from the Soviet context towards pragmatic and independent association by choice.

However, in unpacking Kazakhstan’s definition of the CIS, it is revealed as rather limited as it relies on an inherent understanding that it consists of Central Asia alongside Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus. Nazarbayev demonstrates a factual understanding of the CIS, referencing people living “in Qarağandy [Kazakhstan] or Novosibirsk [Russia], Dnipropetrovsk [Ukraine] or Hrodna [Belarus], Nukus [Uzbekistan] or Khorog [Tajikistan], Nakhchivan [Azerbaijan] or Mary [Turkmenistan], Osh [Kyrgyzstan] or Bendery [Transnistria, Moldova], Batumi [Georgia] or Gyumri [Armenia]” (2011a), including all except the Baltic states, by this point integrated into the EU. Although, he does note that the Baltics, alongside Mongolia, do actively take part in some of the coordinating work of the CIS (2011a). As such, on the surface there appears to be a recognition of the full extent of the post-Soviet space. However, the inclusion of the Baltics, Moldova, and the countries of the South Caucasus is a rarity. Armenia is briefly mentioned in passing as a consequence of its accession to the EAEU. Similarly, and this is also covered later in the discussion on the Turkic world, the fact that Azerbaijan is a post-Soviet republic is the least relevant factor in its rare inclusion in Kazakhstan’s foreign outlook. The conflicts in Georgia and Moldova and the war between Armenia and Azerbaijan simply do not feature. As such, on the whole the CIS space is constructed as Central Asia on the one hand, and Russia, Belarus, and Ukraine on the other. Reflecting on this, Nazarbayev noted that “only 6 states ratified the free trade area agreement signed by all leaders of the CIS states, but Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus were not among them” (2011a). It is important to understand this perception of the CIS space as it relates to Kazakhstan’s negotiation of Russia hegemony in Central Asia. It in effect reduces the post-Soviet space to two spheres of competing interests, Central Asia, and the Slavic troika. By reducing the perception of the post-Soviet space to this central dynamic, the interests of Central Asia are prioritised by becoming one half of Eurasian integration processes, rather than the interests of Kazakhstan alone representing one fifteenth of the post-independence integration debates amongst all

the post-Soviet republics. This demonstrates the importance of discourses and the construction of space. Kazakh elites have effectively cut out what they view as unimportant or distant actors and invested in the creation of Central Asian interests in order to prevent Russia remaining as the centre of the post-Soviet space.

Beyond the CIS and the EAEU, the other major organisation in the post-Soviet space is the CSTO, which was surprisingly absent from the selection of sources. Referred to tangentially as another regional organisation, only one source was wholly dedicated to the CSTO itself, specifically covering the CSTO intervention in Kazakhstan following the Qandy qañtar protests (Turebekova 2022). Taking this source into consideration, a few points emerge which help to explain the absence of the CSTO from the broader selection of sources. The article by political scientist Aiman Turebekova (2022) was published in English and in the *Astana Times*, so its main purpose was to explain the domestic situation in Kazakhstan to an international audience. In this context, the focus of the piece was less on the CSTO itself and more on the government narrative describing the protesters as terrorists, denouncing their “criminal activities... riots, looting, rape and mass violence” (Turebekova 2022). This reveals two things, the first being a recontextualisation of broader international terrorism discourse which serves to delegitimise the protesters, and legitimise the actions of the government which, while heavy-handed, are justified by their opposition to the spectre of terrorism. The second key point is the lack of focus on the CSTO as a post-Soviet organisation. The decision for CSTO intervention is depicted as a necessary anti-terrorist measure, and not linked to the involvement of Russia in the Central Asian space, a link which could easily have been made by preferring an anti-colour revolution narrative rather than an anti-terrorist narrative. Russian narratives of colour revolutions are rejected in favour of an anti-terrorist narrative which, at least rhetorically, does not exclude the potential intervention of other powers.

This international narrative is further strengthened by parallels being drawn with NATO operations, naturalising the CSTO intervention as a rational decision of the Kazakhstani government. The introductory paragraphs discuss the changing role of NATO, citing Western scholars and arguing that “since the demise of the main threat, crisis management and peacekeeping operations have become pillars of the transformed alliance’s *raison d’être*” (Turebekova 2022). This places the CSTO intervention on par with NATO operations, arguing that it is equal in its scope, seriousness, and legitimacy. Research by Libman and Davidzon

argue that the CSTO intervention was a largely symbolic act which indicated support for Tokayev as the new President in the context of behind-the-scenes elite struggles (2023, 1306). They also highlight specifically the Russia-China balance as a potential limiting factor on Russia's influence through the CSTO operation (2023, 1306-1308). Libman and Davidzon conduct their research through the perspective of regime type, arguing that military intervention is a tool to prop up fragile regimes and increase reliance (2023, 1311). The limited nature of this intervention makes this case an exception. Considering both then Libman and Davidzon's (2023) conclusions of symbolism and combined with this discursive analysis which reaches a similar conclusion, this event is a perfect example of negotiation. On the one hand, Russia is pragmatically acknowledged as a regional force, capable of contributing to order and stability, but this intervention is limited by its framing in international terms, and importantly Western terms through the NATO comparison. This legitimises the actions taken, but within the intervention itself highlights Kazakhstan's agency, and does not designate Kazakhstan as simply another rogue post-Soviet state being brought back in from the West.

The deterioration of Russia-Ukraine relations is often emphasised for its international geopolitical consequences rather than its implications for the CIS region. References to refer simply to "tense relations between Russia and Ukraine" (Borbasov 2018), or various geopolitical "perturbations of 2014" (Kaukenov 2022a), "storms" (Kaukenov 2022d), or "turbulence" (Kaukenov 2022d; 2022e). However, here there is a difference in the main players. Where before there was tension between Russia and the West, in the specific case of Ukraine, Europe takes a stronger role as the antagonist. Laumulin laments that "the signing of trade agreements has become a stalemate, presented as a civilisational [choice]" (2013c), referencing the choice Ukraine faced between relations with the EU or the EAEU, and further argued that "Ukrainians are held hostage by the trap of the ideological construction of a "Eurodream", which conflicts with the harsh economic and historical "real life"" (Laumulin 2013c). However, there is an overall absence of overtly Russian narratives concerning the war in Ukraine. Only one source noted the semantic shift in Ukraine from the Great Patriotic War to the Second World War and made a link between Ukrainian nationalism and Nazism (Mekertychev 2015). Published in *Tengrinews*, it stands apart from official narratives, and it should be noted that it does not fully endorse these narratives but rather critiques the political climate in Ukraine. In an ironic tone, it notes the decision of the Ukrainian parliament

to outlaw Nazi and Soviet propaganda, before citing a 1940 of Ukrainian statehood as extolling cooperation with the National Socialist movement in Germany (Mekertychev 2015). However, it stops short of questioning Ukrainian statehood or declaring it a Nazi or fascist state, so it does not fully propagate Russian narratives or indicate an endorsement of Russia's position. Nevertheless, these nods to Russian narratives are in contrast to Kolpakov's early suspicion of Putin's imperialism evidenced through as little as a common currency (2011a), and Laumulin's assertion in response to the annexation of Crimea that the Russian ethnos is imperialist by nature (2014c). On the other extreme, only one source explicitly links the 2022 war to Kazakhstan, making casual reference to "the potential risks and threats to our independence similar to Russia's act of aggression in relation to the sovereignty of Ukraine" (Amrebayev 2023). The question then is how to interpret these conflicting narratives.

On balance, the outcome is that Kazakhstan maintains its distance and refuses to take a side, choosing to blame all present actors for their role in the geopolitical competition which led to Russia's war against Ukraine. In the first instance, Laumulin's anti-European narratives are not as anti-European as they seem. They work to absolve the hostage Ukrainians of blame, trapped in an impossible civilisational choice not of their making. For his part, Nazarbayev pushes the blame to the Ukrainian government for putting the emphasis on politics before economics (2014a). Thus, what comes out of all these competing narratives is a rather simple rejection of geopolitical competition. Kazakhstan is wary of the West-or-East debate which has devastated Ukraine. Kazakhstani discourses thus reject the Eurodream as it seduces Ukrainians and threatens the country's stability, but at the same time accept Western international norms as the basis for EAEU integration in order to constrain Russian hegemony. In the final analysis, the rather self-evident focus at the heart of the Kazakhstani perspective on Ukraine is not Ukrainian interests, but Kazakhstani interests. The presence of competing narratives highlights that Kazakhstan is not equipped to deal with the geopolitical conflict.

Previously, astute definition of geopolitical spaces, differentiating between Central Asia, Eurasia, the CIS, and Europe, allowed Kazakhstan to navigate the post-Soviet space by negotiating Russian hegemony. On the one hand, important economic relations with Russia were maintained, but Kazakhstan created spaces for the expression of its independence. However, in the current climate, a Russia isolated from the West would have no choice but to turn towards Central Asia and China, increasing rather than weakening its position in the

region. The “geostrategic “pivot to the East” of the Russian Federation” (Amrebayev 2022) has not gone unnoticed as “restrictions to the West have given a serious boost to the reorientation of the region’s largest player to the East” (Kaukenov 2022a), and the situation in Ukraine “is pushing [Russia] towards the East” (Laumulin 2014a; 2014b). In this light the scepticism to openly support Ukraine should not be read in terms of a West-Russia binary, but in terms of the impact this has on Russia’s position in Central Asia. Kazakhstan’s position remains against geopolitical competition, and against the hegemony of Russia in Central Asia.

In conclusion, the geopolitical conflict in Ukraine is pushing Russia out of Europe and into Eurasia, against Kazakhstan’s own perception of the region. Kazakhstani discourses have worked to differentiate Eurasia as a separate space, between rather than combining Europe and Asia, in order to give Kazakhstan room to manoeuvre its multi-vector foreign policy in a world of competing great powers. The position of Russia in Eurasia has been questioned as Kazakhstani elites have emphasised Central Asian regionalism as the core of Eurasia. Fittingly, the post-Soviet space has been shrunk to better represent Central Asian interests and reject overt westernisation, and by virtue rejecting great power bloc politics. Far from accepting Russia’s hegemonic position in the region, this aids Central Asian negotiation by accepting Russia’s position in Central Asia, but carefully balancing this through selective adoption of Western norms of international cooperation and strong differentiation between the interests of Russia and the Central Asian republics. As far as Kazakhstan is concerned, Russia’s war against Ukraine has destroyed its balanced perspective of the Eurasian space. In this new environment, Kazakhstan is further separated from its Western partners, and in searching for a way to reorganise the Central Asian space to maintain distance from Moscow’s influence, Asia emerges as a geopolitical space which can be manipulated to negotiate Russia’s renewed, forced, presence in Eurasia.

Chapter 5: Locating Asia

Having established the basic tenets of Eurasian integration, and also the declining interest of Kazakhstan in the West, the aim of this chapter is to look beyond both Eurasia and Russia which often dominate understandings of Kazakhstani foreign policy, and bring the focus on Asia. While Eurasia is nominally comprised of two parts – Europe and Asia – the focus traditionally is very much on Europe, and in particular Russia’s attempts to sit on Europe’s periphery. This means that the perception and understanding of Asia remains simplistic and limited. As such, this chapter is divided into five sections which explore the specific and varied representations of Asia in Kazakhstani foreign policy.

The first section tackles the question of Türkiye and its role in Central Asia. Drawing on ideas of cultural geopolitics, this section demonstrates the evolving Kazakhstani vision of Eurasia. The second section looks beyond close regional partners to explore the discursive role Singapore plays in Kazakhstan as a symbol of non-Western success. The third section takes the empirical cases of the conflicts in Afghanistan and Syria – both regional conflicts in which Kazakhstan has claimed a lead role – to explore the broader construction of the Asian space and specifically regional responses to security threats. This section also introduces the figure of Iran as the fourth point on the Kazakhstani geopolitical compass, highlighting how Kazakhstani nuclear, anti-bloc and anti-great power discourses converge to promote Kazakhstani economic interests in its region. The fourth section engages in discussion of the role of China in Central Asia. Elevated to large-player status alongside Russia, in Kazakhstan China is treated as an unavoidable and critical partner. While China emerges as a counterweight against Russia, there remain geopolitical question marks over Central Asian alignment to China given the increasing perception of China-USA competition which would ruin any efforts made by the Central Asian states to extract themselves from the existing Russia-West conflict. Finally, this chapter concludes by drawing these sections together in a discussion of the role of regional international institutions in Asia. This section explores how Kazakhstan views regional institutions as an invaluable mediator of complex international relations.

Whither civilisational geopolitics? Türkiye and Central Asia

This section explores how Turkic cooperation has been operationalised in Kazakhstani discourse, as not only is Turkic cooperation rather prevalent in Kazakhstani rhetoric, but

furthermore Kazakhstan is portrayed as the epicentre of Turkic culture and integration. In the perspective of Turkish foreign policy and geopolitics more broadly, a pan-Turkic alignment has never been an achievable reality. For one thing, the number of Turkic nation states is quite small, and the titular motherland of Türkiye is isolated from the cluster of independent Turkic nation states of Central Asia, giving it a relative lack of influence if they were to cooperate (Babich 2021). Secondly, the majority of Turkic peoples exist as minorities inside other states, limiting the available levels of cooperation (Babich 2021). This section begins by briefly exploring specifically Kazakhstan-Türkiye relations, or rather the lack thereof. Despite its predisposition as a regional leader, Türkiye is not a major vector of Kazakhstan's foreign policy or viewed as a major presence in Central Asia. Next, this section discusses pan-Turkic cooperation, covering Kazakhstan's role in spearheading further integration. In this context, a new impetus for pan-Turkic cooperation has emerged only recently in Kazakhstan as it looks to employ new vectors to balance its foreign policy. In conclusion, while a pan-Turkic union is not foreseeable, the discursive importance imbued into the vector is increasingly important as sectors of cooperation are expanded and the discourse becomes increasingly fraternal and civilisational, which, assuming the mutual exclusivity of civilisations, put this potentially in conflict with the civilisational discourse surrounding Eurasia.

From a Kazakhstani perspective, Türkiye is viewed as a part of the West and of Europe. Various commentators present basic facts that "[Türkiye] is closely liaised with the European Union" (Babich 2021) and "[Türkiye] is a member state of NATO" (Batalova 2021a), noting also Türkiye's role in Syria, alongside the West, referring to "the occupation of Syrian territory by Turkish and American troops" (Batalova 2021a). The strong use of the word occupation also signals Kazakhstan's aversion to great power politics. While Türkiye may not be a great power, its intervention in Syria is presented here as on par with American and Western military adventurism. This is despite the actual level of Turkish-EU and Turkish-NATO cooperation being rather conflictual (Akgül Açıkmeşe & Triantaphyllou 2012; Güvenç & Özel 2012; Oğuzlu 2012). This perception of Türkiye as a Western country thus limits the potential of Kazakh-Turkish cooperation. In such a context, it would not be unreasonable for Kazakhstan to limit its relationship with Türkiye according to general trends in Kazakh-West relations, rather than seeking deep independent bilateral ties. Indeed, Türkiye is mainly useful to Kazakhstan as a stepping-stone towards the West, as a transit corridor to European

markets (Tokayev 2022b). In this way, a relegation of Türkiye into Kazakhstan's vision of the West limits their bilateral relationship by emphasising Kazakhstani interests, and the attractivity of the European market over Turkish unit and cooperation.

Similarly, despite its reality as both a Turkic state and a former Soviet republic, Azerbaijan does not feature strongly in Kazakhstani rhetoric, limiting their practical relationship. In particular, Kazakhstan does not demonstrate an awareness of, or an eagerness to support Azerbaijan over, the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, on only one occasion noting, in passing, "Azerbaijan's victory in the war for the de-occupation of Nagorno-Karabakh region" (Madiyev 2021), showing limited support for Azeri victory and de-occupation narratives, and the weakness of both post-Soviet and Turkic ties outside Central Asia. As such, bilateral ties remain limited, and Türkiye and Azerbaijan are merely Western extensions of the possibility of Kazakhstan's role as a transit corridor, which once again emphasises Kazakhstan's own centrality between China and Europe. Thus, despite expected surface-level positive rhetoric extolling Turkic links and strong bilateral relations, across the sources both Türkiye and Azerbaijan are discursively represented as Others. Azerbaijan is outside Central Asia and Kazakhstan's understanding of the CIS, and Türkiye is far too Western to have an important role in Central Asia.

While bilateral relations are limited by their exclusion from Kazakhstan's primary region of interest, Turkic integration is a tool deftly handled by Kazakhstan. In fact, Kazakhstan has attempted to claim once again its centrality in being the Turkic heartland, having named the Kazakhstani region and its capital Turkistan as the spiritual centre of Turkic culture (Tokayev 2021). In doing so, "[Tokayev] noted the exceptional importance of modernising the entire Turkic civilisation... Turkistan is of special importance for all Turkic peoples and should become an important ideological centre for integration throughout the Turkic world" (Madiyev 2021). Kazakhstan's ambitions do not stop there, with political scientist Erlan Madiyev noting that:

"in 2019, Uzbekistan joined the [Cooperation Council of Turkic-Speaking States (Turkic Council)] as a full member... in 2018 Hungary joined the organisation as an observer... in the case that Turkmenistan joins as well, the Council will completely encompass the entire Turkic space from the Adriatic Sea to China" (2021)

This sudden interest in Turkic cooperation is a rather recent phenomenon, with over half of the six sources dealing directly with Türkiye and Turkic integration being published since 2021 (Babich 2021; Kaukenov 2022e; Madiyev 2021; Nazarbayev 2014c; Tokayev 2021; Tuimebayev 2015). Considering that two of these are presidential speeches from summits of the Turkic states, and as such are routine (Nazarbayev 2014c; Tokayev 2021), and one is an article published by the then Kazakh ambassador to Türkiye (Tuimebayev 2015). The remainders, consisting of non-governmental opinion pieces were all recent publications (Babich 2021; Kaukenov 2022e; Madiyev 2021), which can be argued to represent an increased general interest in promoting Turkic integration post-2021. In justifying this interest, Madiyev argues that “Turkic integration is not only about the revival of cultural and humanitarian ties among close brotherly peoples, but also a promising direction of foreign economic activity for Kazakhstan” (2021) and acknowledges that “it can become one of the most important geopolitical assets for Kazakhstan” (Madiyev 2021). Considering the deteriorating global geopolitical situation, Turkic integration emerges as a viable option for Kazakhstan to balance its multi-vector foreign policy. The basic tenets connecting the countries are self-evident and as such make for easy rhetorical resources to reshape the Eurasian space away from Kazakhstan’s vision of Eurasia and the CIS challenged by Russia’s aggression against Ukraine, towards a broader vision of Eurasia defined by Turkic cultural elements, emphasising these over the historicity of the Eurasian space as tied primarily to Russia.

In summary, while the idea of the Turkic world is not new, there is a new wind behind it as Kazakhstan searches for alternatives in an increasingly tense international environment in order to maintain its balanced multi-vector foreign policy. In this sense the practical policy outcomes, such as the formation of a competent and powerful Turkic union are not the important factor, but the increased discursive attention paid to Turkic countries. While policy lags behind interest in Türkiye and Azerbaijan, Kazakhstani voices are demonstrating an expanding vision of Eurasia post-2021 and beginning to emphasise more cultural elements. Considering the need to negotiate Russia’s regional influence in Central Asia, these new developments can be seen as a new discursive definition of the Eurasian space and a continuation of Kazakhstan’s multi-vector foreign policy.

Embracing the Asian way: Singapore as a role model

Singapore has emerged as a unique repeated reference of rhetoric in Kazakhstan, despite not belonging to any of the major vectors of Kazakhstani foreign policy. This section explores the role of Singapore in representing a non-Western model of development. The experience not only of Singapore but of the Asian Tigers gave rise to the concept of 'Asian values', which have been recontextualised in Kazakhstan as Eurasian values. These values create a self-serving legitimisation of Kazakhstan's political choices, and engage in a process of clear differentiation with both the West, as Asian characteristics are emphasised, and with Russia, as the Eurasian space is imbued with values from further East, redefining it away from a focus on Russia.

Singapore acts as a discursive marker in Kazakhstan, designating a successful autocratic-leaning country which has prioritised economic development over geopolitics. In an example of mythologising, the origin of Nazarbayev's economics first, politics second principle which guided Kazakhstan's independent foreign policy is found in Asia, either inspired specifically by Singapore and Lee Kuan Yew (Ezhenova 2018), or more generally by "the development of the Asian "Tigers"" (Laumulin 2014c), Singapore among them. Despite their distance and difference, this is an example of recontextualisation as specific elements are drawn from the Asian experience, exemplified primarily by Singapore, and applied to the justification of Kazakhstan's own context and policy decisions. In addition to the economic perspective, Laumulin justifies the "stable, albeit in the West called authoritarian, political model" (2015) of Kazakhstan and Singapore as a reality of new multi-ethnic states. According to Laumulin, "it is enough to see what is going on now in Ukraine (and earlier in Tajikistan)" (2015) to understand that political surety is the core of Kazakhstan's success. This avoidance of ethnic or civilisational conflict under the management of a strong singular figure is a rebuke of the West's model of democracy, linking it to instability and perpetual political conflict. This creates the basis for the emergence of a Kazakhstani model of development which rejects the post-Soviet dilemma to either westernise or fall behind in a competitive global economy.

There is an overt anti-Westernism expressed through the celebration of alternative paths of development against the norms of the Western international order. The West is recognised and maintained as a measuring rod of international success, however this role is increasingly explicitly questioned by the success of others. Indeed, "Singapore has broken all

the stereotypes of the West” (Ezhenova 2018), specifically “[ignoring] the requirements to comply with [OSCE] standards” (Ezhenova 2018), which is a particularly surprising endorsement given Kazakhstan’s previous pride in its OSCE chairmanship. While the West continues to feature as the accepted international model, Kazakhstan is increasingly critical of the viability of this model as a true universal standard. The West is ridiculed as shallow and hypocritical, as the then Ambassador of Kazakhstan to Singapore Usen Suleimen highlights that “the West for a long time called Lee Kuan Yew a usurper and an autocrat... when Singapore became an advanced country, the [USA] congress applauded him” (Ezhenova 2018). This disarms criticism of Kazakhstan for not playing by Western rules, as it implies the possibility of enjoying pleasant relations and indeed economic development without becoming a part of the West. Kazakhstani discourse thus demonstrates a world vision which is aimed more towards Asia than towards the West. It defines itself as a part of the non-Western world as a way of empowering its independent political choices post-independence.

In conclusion, the main role Singapore plays in Kazakhstani discourse is as a validation of Kazakhstan’s path of development. Singapore demonstrates the ability to follow a non-Western path of development and achieve a respectable international standing. This is a rebuke of Western visions of great power competition and the pressure to westernise against Russia, of which Kazakhstan is wary. By engaging with discursive resources recontextualised from Asia, Kazakhstan broadens its world perspective and sets itself apart from the West and thus also its conflict with Russia. This Asian perspective also serves as a message to Russia, as Russian Eurasianist Aleksandr Dugin has explicitly likened Russia’s Eurasianist stance against the West as one of authoritarianism against democracy (Bassin & Aksenov 2006, 107). However, what is important is that once again, easily applicable Russian narratives and influences have been rejected in Kazakhstan. Instead, Kazakhstan’s political system is discursively constructed as an Asian-inspired phenomenon. This works to negotiate Russia’s position in Eurasia by challenging its hegemony over the Eurasian idea. Kazakhstan is active in resisting Russian influence and finding new resources for the promotion of its vision of Eurasia. This creates further distance from Russia as Kazakhstan finds other partners and models and positions itself less in Eurasia and more in Asia.

Not quite great: regional players and external intervention

This section examines the broader construction of the Asian space through emerging security challenges in Kazakhstani discourse. It begins by exploring the conflicts in Afghanistan and Syria, which are not so important in and of themselves, but rather for the role that Kazakhstan plays in promoting regional cooperation to resolve them. These cooperation initiatives act to discredit the role of global powers fighting geopolitical disputes through proxy battles. In the context of Kazakhstani discourse, this is achieved through a widening of the Asian security space. This section then explores specifically the position of Iran in the region as viewed from Kazakhstan. In a continuation of its anti-Western critiques, Kazakhstan appears supportive of Iran in the face of Western sanctions, although not going so far as to support its nuclear development programme. This furthers Kazakhstan's position against the undue influence of great powers and its mediation efforts further demonstrate the use of regional formats as a buffer against great power hegemonies.

Afghanistan and Syria appear in Kazakhstani discourse not as countries but rather as issues which can be used to promote regional initiatives. Syria especially is a clear example of the balanced international role afforded to Kazakhstan through its initiative of the Astana Process to mediate between the global and regional powers of Iran, Russia, Türkiye, and the USA (Batalova 2021a; 2021b). The conflict in Syria is constructed as a conflict of competing interests between these powers, and Kazakhstan does not openly pick a side, in continuation of its balance multi-vector foreign policy. While semantically there is more critique of the West in its "occupation of Syrian territory" (Batalova 2021a), the Kazakhstani narrative does not automatically endorse the opposing position, be that of the Syrian government or of Russia. The Syrian issue is defined in Kazakhstan as one of great power competition. As such, the activated narratives focus on a general aversion to great power intervention and competition, and highlight Kazakhstan's role as a balanced, independent mediator on the side of peace. This reinforces Kazakhstan's creates a strategic but non-confrontational distance between it and both Russia and the West in the case of negotiations over Syria. In this way, the careful construction of the Syrian issue and Kazakhstan's role in the negotiations serve to reinforce narratives which also contribute to the security of Central Asia itself by legitimising Kazakhstan's interest and promoting its efforts to keep great power competition in its region.

Developments in Afghanistan are felt more intensely in Kazakhstan given its closer proximity to Central Asia. With Afghanistan there is more of an effort to engage with the country itself, with then Foreign Minister of Kazakhstan, Erlan Idrissov advocating “integrating Afghanistan into the neighbourhood should create a “win win” situation for all the countries in the region” (2013), so that “Afghanistan can overcome its historical isolation and take its rightful place in the “Heart of Asia”” (Idrissov 2013). Asia is a much broader region than Kazakhstan’s primary domains of Central Asia and Eurasia, and as such the discourse surrounding Afghanistan carefully treads the line between inclusion and exclusion as Afghanistan is a “neighbour” (Idrissov 2013; 2014a), but not a close partner. With the presence of Central Asian minorities in the country, developments in Afghanistan are felt within the tight group of the Central Asian states, beyond the obvious threat of a tangible spill over of violence. According to political scientist Zhaksylyk Sabitov,

“in the context of increasing political turbulence between the US, the EU, Russia, and China, given the factor of unstable Afghanistan, it is necessary for the countries of the region to work out a united position so that the deterioration of relations between different world and regional powers and blocs does not affect the domestic political and economic situation in the countries of Central Asia” (2018)

In effect, Afghanistan represents an intimate security challenge to Central Asia. Nevertheless, while there is a desire to deal with the problem, a clear distinction is drawn between Kazakhstan’s broader sphere of interest and its intimate region. The main aim is to ensure the exclusion of global tensions and protect the Central Asian core. In this context, Afghanistan is not a part of Central Asia, but rather a gateway for external influence in the region, and as such Kazakhstan must develop a strategy to mitigate the risks it poses if it wants to limit the regional influence of great powers.

As such, this regional perspective serves as a message to the broader international community as Kazakhstan criticises Western intervention, but also profits from the crisis in Afghanistan to promote a stronger role for Asian security organisations. On the one hand, Idrissov is clear that “only Afghans can decide the country’s way forward. The international community should limit its efforts to promoting the social and economic rehabilitation of Afghanistan and stay out of politics” (2013). The implication here is that the international community is the broader Western institutions with various opinions and conditions, but no real connection to the region. In contrast, Kazakhstan is quite active in promoting the

involvement of the regional community, through organisations such as the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-building measures in Asia (CICA) and the SCO. Tokayev highlights the existence of the “SCO-Afghanistan Contact Group” (2019; 2020), and even argues that “broader cooperation in the Eurasian space relies on stabilisation of the situation in Afghanistan” (Tokayev 2020). This turn towards Asian mechanisms is clear considering Nazarbayev’s earlier claims to have put Afghanistan on the agenda of the OSCE during Kazakhstan’s chairmanship (Nazarbayev 2012; 2013a). This follows the broader trend of a declining confidence in the ability of great powers to act responsibly, and Kazakhstan’s use of regional structures to limit the power of potential regional hegemonies by locking them into multilateral platforms with a number of local actors and interests.

Iran emerges not only as a regional player in the Syrian conflict, but as an important factor in wider regional stability. Firstly, Kazakhstan’s practical interest in Iran is informed by various narratives of Kazakhstan’s position as the centre of transport networks between China and Europe. The Kazakhstan-Turkmenistan-Iran rail transport network which crosses over Iranian territory is a specific recurring project which Kazakhstani elites are keen to complete (Kaukenov 2022a; 2022c; 2022d; 2022e; Nazarbayev 2013a; 2014c; 2019). In this context, the main aim is to normalise Iran as a country of the region, whom Kazakhstan can then use for its own economic ends. Iran therefore is not viewed as a regional or global power as such, or of note for any power ambitions. Iran is drawn in as a part of the broader Eurasian space, a key transit corridor between China and Europe. It is in Kazakhstan’s interest therefore to engage with Iran on its own terms, and not on terms dictated by the Western-led global order which has sidelined Iran for various historical, political, and mainly nuclear reasons.

This perception of Iran reinforces Kazakhstan’s interest in its region as constructed and defined by it, and delegitimises what Kazakhstan views as an unfavourable hegemony of the West in determining the hegemonic order of the broader Asian space. Kazakhstan has claimed an active role in promoting negotiations to resolve the international tensions surrounding Iran’s nuclear development programme (Kaukenov 2017b; Usenov 2017). This not only maintains Kazakhstan’s position of balanced multi-vector foreign policy, but also criticises ineffective Western diplomacy, highlighting the hypocrisy of such which is not diplomatic negotiations, but rather enforcement of Western views and norms. Nazarbayev explicitly calls out the sanctions regime against Iran, asking “why are we not talking about

such a programme in Pakistan, why are we not talking about Israel, who in fact has nuclear weapons?" (2011b). This is presented as unnecessarily conflictual and hypocritical standards of the West who pick and choose issues on which to take a stand. Note, however, the missing comparison to North Korea, against whom the West has also taken a stand. This highlights the role of discourse. This stance against sanctions against Iran do not represent a broader commitment to resolving the issue of global nuclear weapons, given the absence of a similar interest in or comparable stance on the question of North Korea. However, various Kazakhstani discourses align to inform its stance towards Iran. Kazakhstan can take a stance on the Iran issue because Iran is a part of Kazakhstan's region, the USA is not. The USA is a global power seeking to enforce a certain order on the Asian space, of which Kazakhstan is a part, and clashes with Kazakhstani narratives which have, in negotiating its independence from Russian hegemony in Central Asia have empowered its multi-vector foreign policy and its anti-ideology and anti-bloc approach.

In conclusion, the conflicts in Afghanistan and Syria have brought the world's focus to Kazakhstan's wider region. There has followed an attempt to capitalise on these situations by playing the role of a non-aligned mediator and calling out the geopolitical competition of the great powers. These conflicts, as well as the question of Iran's nuclear weapons programme are constructed as an important part of Kazakhstan's regional space, and as such questions of regional security and a legitimate interest of Kazakhstan. These issues are only defined as issues because they draw on discursive resources to reinforce Kazakhstan's perception of itself, its region, and the world. They are apt theatres for the demonstration of Kazakhstan's peaceful, multi-vector, and independent vision of itself, and as issues drawing in great powers, Kazakhstan is able to project this anti-hegemonic vision it has by campaigning against great power proxy conflicts through its commitment to negotiations. When it comes to negotiating the hegemonic order in Central Asia, in Syria Kazakhstan maintains a distance from the Russian position, indicating the limits of the latter's political influence as Central Asia does not conform to Russia's position in international fora. Nevertheless, Kazakhstan does not directly oppose this position by endorsing competing positions, rather it preferences a neutral position which is overall critical of the role of great powers – both Russia and the USA – in contributing to the regional instability across Afghanistan, Iran, and Syria.

Balance of powers: China in Central Asia

With growing tensions between Russia and the West and aiming to negotiate Russian hegemony in Central Asia, China emerges as a potential counterweight that Kazakhstan could use as leverage. This section begins by exploring what benefits China is presented as bringing to Central Asia as a neutral party in the conflict between Russia and the West. This examines how rhetoric in Kazakhstan enlarges the Eurasian space to include China, diluting Russian influence. Turning then specifically to Kazakhstan, this section explores how China is constructed as a positive influence. Finally, this section considers the how despite its positive image, China presents similar fears as another great power, particularly in the context of the more recent deterioration of China-West relations.

With relations with Russia tainted by the deterioration of the international global situation, Kazakhstan is enlarging its perception of Eurasia to draw China in, bringing benefits to Kazakhstan and limiting Russia's regional hegemony. Most notably, there is an equivalence drawn between the two powers, with China being labelled "our Eastern neighbour" (Altynsarina 2019; Amrebayev 2022), in comparison with Russia's title of "our Northern neighbour" (Kolpakov 2011). Not only does this place an equal weight on both Russia and China as two influential poles in Kazakhstan it also draws them into the same space, centred on Kazakhstan. Similarly, moving beyond Eurasia as it has previously been defined been an emergence of references to "greater Eurasia" (Amrebayev 2022; 2023) in Kazakhstani discourse which basically includes China, and effectively does away with the conception of Eurasia as simply a reinterpretation of the CIS space, which is the basis of so-called Eurasian integration. In this way, the shift in the understanding of Kazakhstan's perception of Eurasia demonstrates a rejection of the centrality of Russia in Central Asia, and indeed demonstrates a move away from the history of the region as on Russia's periphery through the Russian Empire, the USSR, and then the CIS. A redefined Eurasia thus signals the shifting power relations in the region and a continued effort against Russian hegemony in Central Asia.

China is argued to offer more security and differ from other global powers in relation to its global aims. Considering Russia's war against Ukraine, Kazakhstan welcomes "Beijing's guarantees of security and national territorial integrity in the face of the confrontation between Russia and the West, and also the potential risks and threats to our independence similar to Russia's act of aggression in relation to the sovereignty of Ukraine" (Amrebayev

2023). Furthermore, it is not only Russia who draws Kazakhstan's ire. On Russia's war against Ukraine, there is a subtle rebuke of the position taken by the West as well, as there is a promotion of the idea that "China always stood on the side of peace" (Gubaydullina 2022), which is lent weight by its non-involvement in the conflict, in comparison to Russia and the West. Additionally, writing about the Central Asian Nuclear Weapon Free Zone (CANWFZ) Treaty, Idrissov emphasises that China is the only responsible nuclear power, as:

"all nuclear weapon states, excluding China, made interpretative statements on different provisions of the [CANWFZ] Treaty. I would like to [emphasise] the firm position taken by China, which signed the Protocol without any reservations and supported a comprehensive ban and the destruction of nuclear weapons" (2014b)

This demonstrates the Kazakhstani disapproval of the double standards of the great powers which continue to pursue their own interests against local wishes. The CANWFZ Treaty is significant as it outlaws the use of nuclear weapons in Central Asia, and that China is the only nuclear power to accept the Treaty as agreed by the Central Asian states themselves is emphasised as demonstrating the difference between China and the geopolitically conflictual West and Russia. In this way, China emerges as a useful power who is welcomed into the Central Asian space in order to limit the fallout of Russia and Western disputes.

However, there are significant challenges in incorporating a new actor into the region, and the selected sources demonstrate a strong focus on highlighting the economic benefits that China brings to Kazakhstan. One of the most recurring themes to both encourage Chinese investment but also assert Kazakhstan's independence is the equivalence drawn between the various incarnations of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and Kazakhstan's own *Nurly Zhol* [Bright Path] initiative for economic development and investment in transport corridors (e.g. Ali 2021; Altynsarina 2019; Amrebayev 2023; Kaukenov 2022a; 2022d; Kushkumbayev 2015; Laumulin 2015; Nazarbayev 2019; Sabayeva 2015). This plays down the reliance of Kazakhstan on foreign impetus for the development of its economic activities, highlighting instead how Kazakhstani ingenuity is reflected in the similar programmes of other successful countries. This limits the way in which China can use its power as it is not portrayed as an outsider enforcing economic programmes, but rather merely a supporter of Kazakhstan's independently decided path of development.

China's position in Eurasia should not be taken for granted, however, as Kazakhstan has shifted towards Asia in response to deteriorating Russia-West relations, and China and the West are increasingly conflictual. Kaukenov notes that "in recent years, Sinophobia has become quite "hyped"" (2021), which may go some way to explaining why China is so prevalent in the sources. Rather than reflecting strong Chinese influence, this is more likely a concerted campaign to overcome negative views of China. In this sense, China is not a natural partner, but the discourse of Kazakhstani elites, while not reflecting accurately either public perception or the realities of ties between the two countries, aims to naturalise China as part of the Eurasian space considering the challenges Kazakhstan is facing with Russia and the West. However, China presents its own challenges which are not ignored, as "relations between the United States and China... are becoming new triggers for global tensions" (Akylbayev 2021), which creates the fear that "the growing long-term confrontation between China and the United States will create tension in the world. Kazakhstan, which has strategic relationships with Washington, Beijing and Moscow, will be under constant pressure to choose tactical partnerships" (Akylbayev 2021). As such, while China may be the lesser evil of the great powers vying for influence in Central Asia, it is still viewed as a great power alongside the USA and Russia, and thus still viewed hesitantly in Kazakhstan.

In conclusion, Kazakhstan has been involved in an effort to rhetorically integrate itself closer into the Asia space. This has implied a greater emphasis on the role of China in Central Asia, creating a necessary counterbalance to Russian influence in the region. In the context of tense relations between Russia and the West, China has emerged as a responsible power who is less likely to impress itself upon Central Asia than other, more geopolitically minded conflicting powers. Nevertheless, Kazakhstani rhetoric remains cautious about the role of great powers, and there is still some suspicion of China, particularly in the context its own deteriorating relations with the West. As such, the role China plays is presented as primarily an economic one, and it is granted legitimate interests in the Central Asian space on this basis. This inclusion in the broader Eurasian space is reliant on China's continued alignment to accepted Kazakhstani narratives, primarily of economics before politics, and refraining from great power conflict. At the current moment, and in recent years, China has thus been able to contribute to Kazakhstan's efforts to negotiate Russia hegemony in Central Asia, and Kazakh elites have engaged in a strong discursive campaign to promote China. However, with

relations between the West and China deteriorate, this support may not hold as it clashes with key Kazakhstani narratives.

Constructing Asia: the role of regional institutions

With Chinese-Western relations deteriorating, Kazakhstan also needs to emphasise the multilateral character of Asian international relations in order to create a stable region and limit the possible consequences of great power competition. This section explores the representation of Asian regional organisations in Kazakhstani discourse and the consequences this has for regional power dynamics. This section begins by covering the falling popularity of Western institutions, and the argued benefits of Asian cooperation. This considers the role played by the CICA and the SCO in managing regional dynamics. Then, this section considers the ever-expanding role of the SCO and how this demonstrates a growing competition with the EAEU as Kazakhstan's priority for regional integration. This implies the gradual phasing out of Russia as the dominant regional power, but the wide scope of SCO membership prevents any other single player from becoming too dominant in the region. Finally, it considers the relative absence of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) as a figure in Kazakhstan's global outlook. As such, Kazakhstan demonstrates how regional organisations can be utilised to prevent the formation of power hegemonies and managing regional power dynamics.

Compared to Kazakhstan's earlier pride in its OSCE chairmanship, the tide has fully turned towards Asian cooperation structures. Western institutions no longer serve as a role model for their Asian counterparts, in context of their increasing politicisation. Babich explains:

“an Asian analog (sic) of the European OSCE, CICA in many ways outdid its European prototype, which is now torn apart by the ambitions and animosities between such members of OSCE as Russia and the [USA], Belarus, and Poland” (2022)

This argues that Western institutions no longer function as effective mechanisms but are torn apart by in-fighting and politics. This also continues the theme of the gradual turn away from the West and Russia, which are involved in a geopolitical conflict of which Kazakhstan does not approve. The consequences of these internal tensions is in stark contrast to the claim that the CICA unties and provides an opportunity for dialogue between the conflicting parties of India and Pakistan (Kaukenov 2017b), and that “the SCO is a mechanism

for interaction with China and Russia, and, after enlargement, with India and Pakistan as well” (Kaukenov 2018c). This positive image of Asian cooperation follows the established trend of economics before politics, and is a continual repudiation of what is perceived as the ideologically driven West. Driving out this external influence, Kazakhstan is creating a space defined by non-Western values and with a number of poles of influence: Russia, China, and India. In this context, the regional cooperation initiatives create a more balanced space in Asia which avoids the emergence of a single regional hegemon.

The proliferation of regional organisations not only serves to manage external influence, but also to balance competing regional hegemons. Here, the desire that “relations between the SCO and the Eurasian Economic Commission would help unleash the potential for cooperation in the Eurasian space” (Ali 2021) ties what was previously a larger Asian space directly to Kazakhstan’s Eurasia, or in plainer terms dilutes Russia’s presence in Eurasia by coupling it with China and India as emerging Asian powers. Kaukenov expresses this rather explicitly, writing that “Russia aspires to use the [SCO]... for geopolitical confrontation with its opponents” (2018d), and yet “the drift of the SCO into a geopolitical club in confrontation with the West... does not interest a single member of the SCO, except for Russia” (Kaukenov 2018d). It follows that since India and China have close ties to Western economies, and as such are likely to resist Russia’s descent into conflict (Kaukenov 2018d). This is also demonstrated through Nazarbayev’s initiative of a “systemic economic dialogue between the EAEU, EU, SCO and [Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)]” (Ali 2021). While the equivalence as economic-political integration projects between the EAEU, the EU, and ASEAN is apparent, it is not immediately clear what role the SCO plays here. Given that the SCO and the EAEU are not mutually exclusive in terms of their membership, this could imply a growing emphasis on the SCO, leading to it slowly and quietly replacing the EAEU as Eurasia’s primary regional organisation, on par with the EU and ASEAN.

The OIC is often referenced in passing as another regional organisation which Kazakhstan actively supports, but overall does not feature heavily in the sources as a focus. This is important to consider in relation to Kazakhstan’s definition of the Asian space and its own self-identification. As explored, the Asian region is quite broad from Kazakhstan’s central perspective, spreading eastwards to China, but also southwards towards India and Pakistan, but also westwards to Iran, Syria, and Türkiye. This means that the Middle East does not

appear as a region in and of itself, rather select countries feature as important aspects of Kazakhstani foreign policy, as explored in the cases of Afghanistan, Iran, Syria, and Türkiye. This is important as Kazakhstan's relations are diverse, from historical relations with Russia to economic ties to China and civilisational ties to Türkiye. However, there is a significant absence of religious identification. Despite being a Muslim country, Kazakhstan avoids this being a key component of its identity. In religious terms it prefers broader identification, proudly hosting the Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions (e.g. Mami 2013; Nazarbayev 2014b; Tokayev 2016; 2022a; Zhussupova 2021). Institutionally and internationally, this indicates that Kazakhstan is not invested in religious affairs, and as such stays out of the politics of the Middle East. This is an interesting contrast to studies which have examined the emergence and institutionalisation of Islam as a part of Kazakh identity and politics post-independence, with a necessarily strong domestic focus (e.g. Malik 2019; Omelicheva 2011; Rorlich 2003; Yemelianova 2014). This indicates that there is a certain disconnect between the internal processes of identification and their external expression. For the moment religion is not an important foreign policy priority, instead Kazakhstan externally concentrates on emerging security concerns, and opposing great power competition in the region, focussing on maintaining its independence against regional hegemony.

In conclusion, with rising tensions between Russia and the West, Kazakhstan has exhibited a shift towards Asia in its foreign policy, emphasising Asian institutions and mechanisms to foster its independent foreign policy and interests. The new emphasis on Asian regional initiatives serves to delegitimise the influence of the ideological West and promote a space based on pragmatic, and thus supposedly more effective, cooperation. Additionally, with multiple centres of power in Asia, Kazakhstan's definition of these as one geopolitical space and uniting them under large regional institutions prevents the emergence of a single regional hegemon. This is particularly important in the current context, given the conflict between Russia and the West, which has spurred Kazakhstan's turn towards Asia, and the potential for future conflict between the West and China. This demonstrates the vital importance of multilateral regional activities in managing these broader global trends. The specific case of Kazakhstan also demonstrates how the shifting conception of its region, expanding Eurasia towards greater visions of Asia broadly works to mitigate the hegemony of Russia in the confined Eurasian space.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

This thesis has explored the question of geopolitical space in Central Asia. The end of the Cold War marked a turning point in global history as the countries of the former Soviet bloc needed to reassert themselves in the new global environment. For the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, a renewed focus on geopolitical civilisational discourses saw them engage in their own version of development denoted as westernisation and cementing their accession from the East to the West. Despite their shared history, this is not a shared process across the entire space of the former USSR, as other regions such as the South Caucasus and Central Asia have confronted other challenges and pressures. With the launch of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, this raised the question of the Central Asian republics as the world was once again divided into the West and East. Neither a part of the West, nor fully aligning to Russia, the Central Asian republics now present a challenge to this wisdom of a binary world. This raises the question of the applicability of geopolitical constructs in the understanding of countries' identification and their foreign policy.

Taking this problem of geopolitical constructs, this thesis has delved into the field of Critical Geopolitics to facilitate the deconstruction of the Central Asian space. This deconstruction moves away from accepted notions of East and West, Europe and Asia, to explore how these regions are constructed in local discourses and the perspective this brings to Kazakhstan's international relations. Drawing on the work of Buranelli (2018) in the negotiation of Russian hegemony in Central Asia, the central focus of this work has been how Kazakhstani discourse contribute to the management of Russia's influence in the region. Moving away from his practice-heavy analysis, and in the fashion of Critical Geopolitics, the thesis presented a Critical Discourse Analysis of a collection of 103 presidential speeches, and editorials, opinion pieces, and government interviews published in a selection of Kazakhstani media outlets.

This thesis has specifically explored the role of the discursive construction of geopolitical space in negotiating regional hegemony. By exploring the way in which actors in Kazakhstan express their views of the world and region around them, this gives an insight into the power relationship present. Examining these relationships reveals the way in which Kazakhstan's balanced multi-vector foreign policy works to maintain Kazakhstan's independence and autonomy. The primary aim of this policy is to avoid the undue regional

hegemony of an external power. This thesis has considered specifically the role of Russia in Central Asia and Eurasia, and the directions of Kazakhstani foreign policy which have limited the extent of Russia's hegemony in the region. With a deteriorating political climate between Russia and the West, Kazakhstan has executed an Eastern turn in its foreign policy, exploring other vectors of foreign policy in an effort to maintain its balanced position. This has covered the growing importance of China as a counterweight to Russia in Central Asia. Nevertheless, Kazakhstan is careful to avoid affording too much weight to China, and has activated other vectors of its foreign policy, exploring multilateral regional integration and cooperation as a method of mitigating any regional hegemony by engaging potentially competing powers in a diverse framework incorporated with smaller regional actors. After drawing these ideas together and overviewing the results of the research, this chapter then offers some reflections on some of the key points of the thesis. It discusses the implication of an unclear position regarding Russia's war against Ukraine, and the large number of sources promoting China. It then also addresses possible avenues for future research. This is drawn from the strong presence of anti-terrorist rhetoric across a wide variety of sources, and the implications of the absence of the OIC as an organisation and the Middle East as a region in Kazakhstani discourses.

In summary, Kazakhstani regionalism is most obvious through the various initiatives in the Eurasian space. This space was born of the collapse of the USSR and the faltering cooperation of the CIS. However, Kazakhstan has recontextualised Eurasianism, contributing to the institutionalisation of the EAEU, and setting it up as an analogue to the EU, thus elevating its status and aiming to limit Russia's control over the organisation. Beyond the institution itself, Kazakhstan has equally embedded a value-based discourse into Eurasianism, making sure to separate Eurasia from both Europe and Asia and build a region responsive to its specific needs. This relates to the failure of the CIS to materialise into stronger cooperation as the post-Soviet space shrank and the independent republics began to make their own way in the world. Responding to this, Kazakhstan shrunk its region from the broad CIS to Eurasia. However, this shrinkage had the consequence of drawing Kazakhstan into a smaller ring of countries around Russia. As such, a strong impetus emerged for the crystallisation of Central Asian regionalism. Only a strong integration and cooperation of the Central Asian republics

could counter Russian hegemony and ensure that their interests were respected in the wider Eurasian space.

With the deteriorating relationship between Russia and the West, there was a new risk that Russia would turn its attention eastwards, pushing itself further upon Central Asia. In response, Kazakhstan turned first, investing in a wide range of Asian institutions, organisations, and mechanisms to find partners and counterweights to Russia's influence in Central Asia. The most important step is to prioritise organisations which combine Russia and China as actors. This is seen through the prevalence of the SCO as the premier Asian cooperation forum across the sources collected. This begins the shift of Kazakhstan's focus from Eurasia to greater Eurasia, to Asia quite broadly, including the inclusion of India in the SCO to round out the Asian space and prevent the domination of China. Acknowledging that the world is not simply full of great powers, Kazakhstan is also actively involved in empowering regional powers as smaller counterweights to great power competition. Frustrated by instability in Afghanistan and Syria where great powers fight proxy battles, Kazakhstan is involved in diplomatic mediations and negotiations against great power interests. Reviving interest in the Turkic world draws Kazakhstan closer to Türkiye and provides a new transit route for goods from China to Europe, much to Kazakhstan's benefit. Noticing the international isolation of Iran, Kazakhstan is vocal in calling out Western hypocrisy and recognising the regional role that Iran could play as yet another piece of Kazakhstan's Eurasian transport network. These smaller poles prevent a full shift from Russian to Chinese hegemony and ensure that all vectors of Kazakhstan's foreign policy are active and providing balance.

As the main vector of Kazakhstani foreign policy remains its immediate region and neighbours, for the moment Russia is still considered a major player. As such, a lot of attention has been given to the CIS space. However, this space is rather limited in its scope to the inclusion of Central Asia alongside Belarus, Russia, and Ukraine. Despite this, the Kazakhstani position on Ukraine presents a number of competing perspectives. There are a number of potential reasons for this. The first could simply be an understanding of the sensitivity of the topic and the need for considered thought – certainly the opinion pieces of Kolpakov (2011a) and Laumulin (2014c) which openly identify Russian imperialism, and those of Laumulin (2013a; 2013b; 2013c; 2014a; 2014b; 2014c), Mekertychev (2015), and Zhuravlev (2011)

which are cautious of the spectre of the West, are more adventurous and explicit in their tone than any governmental output. This revives narratives which are critical of the pressure of westernisation, and great power competition, critiquing both the West as a construct pushing a particular development narrative, and Russia for its self-endowed belief to have a right to influence across the CIS space.

As such, a lack of overt rhetorical work concerning Ukraine – either for or against, however that binary is defined – represents a strategic distancing. The Soviet Union has collapsed, of that the Kazakhstani elite are sure, and they know that the interests of the Baltics differ to those of Belarus and Ukraine, which differ further to those in the South Caucasus. The prevalence of rhetoric concerning specifically Central Asian regionalism, without Russia, attest to this. Kazakhstan's place is in Central Asia, overshadowed by Russia to the North. As such, rather than taking a clear position on Ukraine – which would force Kazakhstan to make an impossible choice between conflicting great powers – the Kazakhstani elite rely on accepted discourses which reinforce Kazakhstan's traditional approach. This approach is critical of great power competition and does not endorse the war launched by Russia, or the actions of the West, interpreted as contributing to tensions a side party to the conflict, even if not directly to blame. This approach also implicates a criticism of Russia, Ukraine, and the West for putting politics before economics. By privileging their status as great powers, Russia and the West have put Ukraine in an impossible situation, and by engaging in symbolic acts and endorsing this great power conflict, the Ukrainian government has failed to provide a stable outcome for its citizens. As a consequence, without directly opposing Russia, Kazakhstan continues to demonstrate its unwelcome influence in Central Asia by reinforcing anti-great power narratives and investing in its multi-vector foreign policy.

On the point of China, however, it should be emphasised that this is a discourse analysis, and as such, the overemphasis on China in Kazakhstani discourse does not necessarily represent an actual interest in the country. Especially since there is an acknowledged trend of Sinophobia in Kazakhstan (Kaukenov 2021), it would not be improbable that the Kazakhstani elite are engaged in an active rhetorical campaign to improve China's image – in the name of contributing to Kazakhstan's economic development – rather than signalling any concrete close relationship. It is important also to note that China is not viewed in a completely positive light. China is still a great power, and as such poses very much

the same risks to Kazakhstan as the USA or Russia. As such, Kazakhstan is watching the state of West-China relations and is actively engaged with Asian partners beyond China as a counterweight to Russia. This is demonstrated by the emphasis put on bringing India into the SCO, and Kazakhstan's wider vectors of foreign policy, including the Turkic world which in any other circumstance would not appear as the most productive endeavour.

While this thesis has focussed on the construction of geopolitical space, specifically examining regionalisms and geopolitics, a number of interesting discourses have come up which warrant further and deeper research. This is drawn from the fact that despite cropping up as a tangential reference every so often, the OIC does not feature as a major vector of Kazakhstani foreign policy, and the Middle East does not appear as a region. Countries which might be considered Middle Eastern are included as a part of Kazakhstan's broader understanding of Asia when they are of interest to Kazakhstan. This negates other potential understandings of those countries as they are removed from the Middle East context and placed into Asia. Rather than viewing the Syrian war as linked, for example, to the Arab Spring, Kazakhstani narratives focus on the aspect of power competition between various external actors, including Iran, Russia, Türkiye, and the USA. Nevertheless, this is further complicated by the prevalence of anti-terrorist discourse. This is something which deserves more attention in the Kazakhstani case. Anti-terrorist rhetoric is a common thread for a number of international actors and is problematic because it is a phenomenon which is strongly rhetorically linked to the Middle East and specifically to Islamic extremism. It is also a discourse which has been taken up by China in the justification of its policy towards the Xinjiang region (Brophy 2021), and also in Kazakhstan by the government in an effort to delegitimise the Qandy qañtar protests and justify the CSTO intervention (Turebekova 2022). Considering Kazakhstan's Muslim-majority population, a question then emerges about the understanding of terrorism and religious extremism. While Omelicheva (2011) has explored emerging securitisation domestically as this relates to questions of Kazakhstani self-identification, the discursive absence of the OIC and the Middle East in Kazakhstan's external expression indicates a tension between the two spheres which needs further exploration. This raises a number of avenues for research contributing to the study of anti-terrorist discourse, be this as the basis for regional organisations; its role in state repression; or more specifically to the Kazakhstani case, an exploration of the implications of operationalisation of discourses

on terrorism which are often inherently, and sometimes even explicitly, linked to Islam in a Muslim society, considering the way this frames ideas of national identification.

In summary, discourses in Kazakhstani foreign policy work to construct geopolitical space. This construction of space represents how the world and its immediate region is viewed in Kazakhstan, and has implications for the roles of international actors. In pursuing a multi-vector foreign policy, Kazakhstan is against great power competition in Central Asia, and the emergence then of a regional hegemon against the interest of the Central Asian republics. Thus, discourses of regionalisms are used to include and exclude actors, limiting their room for manoeuvre when they are included, to define the Central Asian space as one which prioritises local interests against any hegemonic activity.

References

- Akgül Açıkmeşe, S & Triantaphyllou, D 2012, 'The NATO–EU–Turkey trilogy: the impact of the Cyprus conundrum', *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, vol. 12, no. 4, pp. 555-573.
- Akylbayev, I 2021, 'The rise of Kazakh diplomacy: building bridges out of barriers. Five recommendations', *Astana Times*, 17 March, <<https://astanatimes.com/2021/03/the-rise-of-kazakh-diplomacy-building-bridges-out-of-barriers-five-recommendations/>>.
- Ali, Y 2021, '20 years of Shanghai Cooperation Organization: a view from Kazakhstan', *Astana Times*, 15 June, <<https://astanatimes.com/2021/06/20-years-of-shanghai-cooperation-organization-a-view-from-kazakhstan/>>.
- Altynsarina, E 2019, 'Kazakhstan and China: strengthening friendship and partnership in a new era', *Astana Times*, 15 September, <<https://astanatimes.com/2019/09/kazakhstan-and-china-strengthening-friendship-and-partnership-in-a-new-era/>>.
- Ambrosio, T & Lange, WA 2014, 'Mapping Kazakhstan's geopolitical code: an analysis of Nazarbayev's presidential addresses 1997-2014', *Eurasian Geography and Economics*, vol. 55, no. 5, pp. 537-559.
- Amrebayev, A 2022, 'Эксперт рассказал о перспективе казахстанско-китайских отношений', *Zakon*, 14 October, <<https://www.zakon.kz/6027416-ekspert-rasskazal-o-perspektive-kazakhstansko-kitaiskikh-otnoshenii.html>>.
- Amrebayev, A 2023, 'Казахстан – Китай: в преддверии нового "золотого тридцатилетия"', *Zakon*, 30 January, <<https://www.zakon.kz/6382902-kazakhstan-kitay-v-preddverii-novogo-zolotogo-tridtsatiletiya.html>>.
- Aneschi, L 2022, *Analysing Kazakhstan's Foreign Policy: Regime Neo-Eurasianism in the Nazarbayev Era*, Routledge, Milton Park, UK.
- Atmaca, AÖ & Torun, Z 2022, 'Geopolitical visions in Turkish foreign policy', *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies*, vol. 24, no. 1, pp. 114-137.
- Babich, D 2020, 'President Tokayev addresses the SCO Summit: emphasizes collective responses to common threats', *Astana Times*, 13 November, <<https://astanatimes.com/2020/11/president-tokayev-addresses-the-sco-summit-emphasizes-collective-responses-to-common-threats/>>.
- Babich, D 2021, 'The Turkic World: opportunities instead of impediments', *Astana Times*, 3 April, <<https://astanatimes.com/2021/04/the-turkic-world-opportunities-instead-of-impediments/>>.
- Babich, D 2022, 'The most successful summit of 'Asian OSCE': how Astana became the diplomatic capital of Asia thanks to CICA', *Astana Times*, 14 October, <<https://astanatimes.com/2022/10/the-most-successful-summit-of-asian-osce-how-astana-became-the-diplomatic-capital-of-asia-thanks-to-cica/>>.

- Bakić-Hayden, M 1995, 'Nesting Orientalisms: the case of Former Yugoslavia', *Slavic Review*, vol. 54, no. 4, pp. 917-931.
- Bassin, M 2003, '"Classical" Eurasianism and the geopolitics of Russian identity', *Ab Imperio*, no. 2, pp. 257-266.
- Bassin, M & Aksenov, KE 2006, 'Mackinder and the Heartland Theory in Post-Soviet Geopolitical Discourse', *Geopolitics*, vol. 11, no. 1, pp. 99-118.
- Baumann, M 2018, 'Eurasianist rhetoric in Russia and Kazakhstan. Negotiating hegemony through different visions of society', *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, vol. 20, no. 1, pp. 34-42.
- Batalova, A 2021a, 'Астанинский процесс переехал в Сочи. Как это было', *Tengrinews*, 22 February, <<https://tengrinews.kz/opinion/astaninskiy-protsess-pereehal-v-sochi-kak-eto-byilo-1089/>>.
- Batalova, A 2021b, 'Изжил ли себя Астанинский процесс? Мнение', *Tengrinews*, 13 July, <<https://tengrinews.kz/opinion/izjil-li-sebya-astaninskiy-protsess-mnenie-1114/>>.
- BBC 2023, 'Kazakhstan Media Guide', 24 January, <<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-pacific-15482614>>.
- Borbasov, S 2018, 'Cooperation with EU is source of development for Kazakhstan', *Astana Times*, 14 August, <<https://astanatimes.com/2018/08/cooperation-with-eu-is-source-of-development-for-kazakhstan/>>.
- Brophy, D 2021, *China Panic: Australia's alternative to paranoia and pandering*, La Trobe University Press, Melbourne.
- Brubaker, R & Cooper F 2000, 'Beyond "identity"', *Theory and Society*, vol. 29, no. 1, pp. 1-47.
- Bugayenko, A 2018, 'Для чего Казахстан объединяет силы с Узбекистаном', *Tengrinews*, 28 March, <<https://tengrinews.kz/opinion/dlya-chego-kazahstan-obyedinyaet-silyi-s-uzbekistanom-741/>>.
- Buranelli, FC 2018, 'Spheres of influence as negotiated hegemony: the case of Central Asia', *Geopolitics*, vol. 23, no. 2, pp. 378-403.
- Campbell, D 1998, *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis.
- Chirot, D & Hall, TD 1982, 'World-system theory', *Annual Review of Sociology*, vol 8, pp. 81-106.
- Cooley, A 2014, *Great Games, Local Rules*, Oxford University Press.
- Davis Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies n.d., 'Media: Kazakhstan', *CASPANIA*, Harvard University, <<https://caspiana.omeka.fas.harvard.edu/exhibits/show/media/kazakhstan>>.

- Decree No. 741 2014, *О Концепции внешней политики Республики Казахстан на 2014 – 2020 годы*, 21 January, Astana, available at https://www.akorda.kz/ru/legal_acts/decrees/o-koncepcii-vneshnei-politiki-respubliki-kazahstan-na-2014-2020-gody.
- Decree No. 280 2020, *On the Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2020-2030*, 6 March, Nur-Sultan, https://www.akorda.kz/en/legal_acts/decrees/on-the-concept-of-the-foreign-policy-of-the-republic-of-kazakhstan-for-2020-2030.
- Dijkink, G 1996, *National Identity & Geopolitical Visions: Maps of Pride & Pain*, Routledge, London.
- Dodds, KJ 1993, 'Geopolitics, experts and the making of foreign policy', *Area*, vol. 25, no. 1, pp. 70-74.
- Ezhenova, K 2018, 'Suleimen: BRI can help Kazakhstan attract investments not only from Singapore, but also from other countries in South-East Asia', *Astana Times*, 20 November, <https://astanatimes.com/2018/11/suleimen-bri-can-help-kazakhstan-attract-investments-not-only-from-singapore-but-also-from-other-countries-in-south-east-asia/>.
- Fairclough, N 2010, 'A dialectical–relational approach to critical discourse analysis in social research', in N Fairclough (ed.), *Critical Discourse Analysis: the Critical Study of Language*, Routledge, London, pp. 230-254.
- Foxall, A 2019, 'From Evropa to Gayropa: A Critical Geopolitics of the European Union as Seen from Russia', *Geopolitics*, vol. 24, no. 1, pp. 174-193.
- Gotev, G 2023, 'Kazakhstan closes trade mission in Russia during PM Mishustin's visit', *Euractiv*, 3 February, <https://www.euractiv.com/section/central-asia/news/kazakhstan-closes-trade-mission-in-russia-during-pm-mishustins-visit>.
- Gubaydullina, M 2022, '"Держать руку на пульсе мировых перемен": политолог о значении G20 для Казахстана', *Zakon*, 16 November, <https://www.zakon.kz/6030268-politolog-ob-predvaritelnykh-itogakh-sammita-g20-dlia-kazahstana.html>.
- Güvenç, S & Özel, S 2012, 'NATO and Turkey in the post-Cold War world: between abandonment and entrapment', *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, vol. 12, no. 4, pp. 533-553.
- Hanks, RR 2009, 'Multi-vector politics' and Kazakhstan's emerging role as a geo-strategic player in Central Asia', *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies*, vol. 11, no. 3, pp. 257-267.
- Hansen, L 2006, *Security as Practice. Discourse Analysis and the Bosnian War*, Routledge, London.
- Huntington, SP 1993, 'The clash of civilizations?', *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 72, no. 3, pp. 22-49.

- Huntington, SP 1996, *The Clash of the Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, Simon & Schuster, New York.
- Idrissov, E 2013, 'Regional integration is the 'key' to stabilising Afghanistan', *Astana Times*, 28 November, <<https://astanatimes.com/2013/11/regional-integration-key-stabilising-afghanistan/>>.
- Idrissov, E 2014a, 'Defining the contours of Kazakhstan's diplomacy up to 2020', *Astana Times*, 5 February, <<https://astanatimes.com/2014/02/defining-contours-kazakhstans-diplomacy-2020/>>.
- Idrissov, E 2014b, 'A new step forward to greater regional and global security', *Astana Times*, 13 May, <<https://astanatimes.com/2014/05/new-step-forward-greater-regional-global-security/>>.
- Jordanova, A 2022, 'Escaping Russian war: Central Asia pursues its own agenda', *New Eastern Europe*, 22 December, <<https://neweasterneurope.eu/2022/12/22/escaping-russian-war-central-asia-pursues-its-own-agenda/>>.
- Kaczmarek, M 2017, 'Two ways of influence-building: the Eurasian Economic Union and the One Belt, One Road initiative', *Europe-Asia Studies*, vol. 69, no. 7, pp. 1027-1046.
- Karin, E 2014, 'Key security challenges in Central Asia', *Astana Times*, 6 February, <<https://astanatimes.com/2014/02/key-security-challenges-central-asia/>>.
- Kassen, M 2018, 'Understanding foreign policy strategies of Kazakhstan: a case study of the landlocked and transcontinental country', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, vol. 31, no. 3-4, pp. 314-343.
- Kaukenov, A 2016, 'Is Kazakhstan able to bring together EAEU and EU?', *Astana Times*, 10 May, <<https://astanatimes.com/2016/05/is-kazakhstan-able-to-bring-together-eaeu-and-eu/>>.
- Kaukenov, A 2017b, 'СВМДА: в чем ценность для Азии и для Казахстана?', *Zakon*, 5 October, <<https://www.zakon.kz/4881632-svmda-v-chem-tsennost-dlya-azii-i-dlya.html>>.
- Kaukenov, A 2018c, 'Саммит государств ЦА: внешним игрокам не о чем беспокоиться', *Zakon*, 28 March, <<https://www.zakon.kz/4910673-sammit-gosudarstv-tsa-vneshnim-igrokam.html>>.
- Kaukenov, A 2018d, 'ШОС на новом этапе: что делать Казахстану?', *Zakon*, 8 June, <<https://www.zakon.kz/4922376-shos-na-novom-etape-hto-delat.html>>.
- Kaukenov, A 2021, 'Мифы и реальность присутствия Китая в Казахстане', *Zakon*, 29 October, <<https://www.zakon.kz/5083732-mify-i-realnost-prisutstviya-kitaya-v.html>>.
- Kaukenov, A 2022a, 'Политолог рассказал о Шелковом пути в новых геополитических реалиях 2022 года', *Zakon*, 13 June, <<https://www.zakon.kz/6016948-politolog-rasskazal-o-shelkovom-puti-v-novykh-geopoliticheskikh-realiakh-2022-goda.html>>.

- Kaukenov, A 2022b, 'Традиция дружить: как развивались отношения Казахстана и России', *Zakon*, 28 November, <<https://www.zakon.kz/6031449-traditsiya-druzhit-kak-razvivalis-otnosheniya-kazakhstan-i-rossii.html>>.
- Kaukenov, A 2022c, 'Центральная Азия и Индия: магистрали сотрудничества', *Zakon*, 26 January, <<https://www.zakon.kz/6005283-tsentralnaia-aziia-i-indiia-magistrali-sotrudnichestva.html>>.
- Kaukenov, A 2022d, 'Эксперт рассказал о развитии отношений между Казахстаном и Китаем', *Zakon*, 26 August, <<https://www.zakon.kz/6023183-razvitie-otnoshenii-kazakhstan-i-kitaia.html>>.
- Kaukenov, A 2022e, 'Эксперт рассказал о роли Турции в Центральной Азии', *Zakon*, 5 September, <<https://www.zakon.kz/6023947-ekspert-rasskazal-o-rol-i-turtsii-v-tsentralnoi-azii.html>>.
- Khudaibergenov, O 2015, 'Whether a common EAEU currency?', *Astana Times*, 23 March, <<https://astanatimes.com/2015/03/whether-a-common-eaeu-currency/>>.
- Koch, N 2013, 'Kazakhstan's changing geopolitics: the resource economy and popular attitudes about China's growing regional influence', *Eurasian Geography & Economics*, vol. 54, no. 1, pp. 110-133.
- Kolpakov, A 2011a, 'Загадки Путина', *Tengrinews*, 20 October, <<https://tengrinews.kz/opinion/zagadki-putina-165/>>.
- Kolpakov, A 2011c, 'Ответ Н. Назарбаева', *Tengrinews*, 26 October, <<https://tengrinews.kz/opinion/otvet-n-nazarbaeva-170/>>.
- Kucera, J 2017, '"Between Europe and Asia": geography and identity in post-Soviet nation-building narratives', *Central Asian Affairs*, vol. 4, no. 4, pp. 331-357.
- Kushkumbayev, S 2015, 'Kazakhstan's Nurdy Zhol and China's economic belt of the Silk Road: confluence of goals', *Astana Times*, 22 September, <<https://astanatimes.com/2015/09/kazakhstan-nurdy-zhol-and-chinas-economic-belt-of-the-silk-road-confluence-of-goals/>>.
- Kuus, M 2007, *Geopolitics Reframed: Security and Identity in Europe's Eastern Enlargement*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York.
- Laruelle, M 1999, 'Jeux de miroir. L'idéologie eurasiste et les allogènes de l'Empire russe', *Cahiers d'études sur la Méditerranée orientale et le monde turco-iranien*, no. 28, pp. 207-230.
- Laruelle, M 2002, 'Les ambiguïtés de l'idéologie eurasiste kazakhe : ouverture sur le monde russe ou germeture nationaliste ?', *Cahiers d'études sur le Méditerranée orientale et le monde turco-iranien*, no. 34, pp. 119-134.
- Laruelle, M 2004, 'The two faces of contemporary Eurasianism: an imperial version of Russian nationalism', *Nationalities Papers*, vol. 32, no. 1, pp. 115-136.

- Laruelle, M 2012, *Russian Eurasianism: An Ideology of Empire*, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore.
- Laruelle, M 2021, *Central Peripheries: Nationhood in Central Asia*, UCL Press, London.
- Laumulin, Ch 2013a, 'À la guerre comme à la guerre?', *Tengrinews*, 4 June, <<https://tengrinews.kz/opinion/-la-guerre-comme-la-guerre-400/>>.
- Laumulin, Ch 2013b, 'À la guerre comme à la guerre? - 2', *Tengrinews*, 11 June, <<https://tengrinews.kz/opinion/-la-guerre-comme-la-guerre-2-403/>>.
- Laumulin, Ch 2013c, 'À la guerre comme à la guerre? - 3. Битва за Украину', *Tengrinews*, 3 December, <<https://tengrinews.kz/opinion/-la-guerre-comme-la-guerre-3-bitva-za-ukrainu-450/>>.
- Laumulin, Ch 2014a, 'Большая Игра и создание ЕАЭС. À la guerre comme à la guerre?- 4', *Tengrinews*, 29 May, <<https://tengrinews.kz/opinion/bolshaya-igra-i-sozdanie-eaes-la-guerre-comme-la-guerre-4-493/>>.
- Laumulin, Ch 2014b, 'Крым и Большая Игра', *Tengrinews*, 3 April, <<https://tengrinews.kz/opinion/kryim-i-bolshaya-igra-482/>>.
- Laumulin, Ch 2014c, 'Майдан и Казахстан', *Tengrinews*, 25 February, <<https://tengrinews.kz/opinion/maydan-i-kazahstan-469/>>.
- Laumulin, Ch 2015, 'Сингапур и Казахстан', *Tengrinews*, 6 April, <<https://tengrinews.kz/opinion/singapur-i-kazahstan-532/>>.
- Lenta.ru 2016, 'Emirates', *Lenta*, 12 April, <<https://lenta.ru/articles/2016/04/12/emirates/>>.
- Li, Y 2015, 'Eurasian integration key to sustainable development, EEC Economic Minister says', *Astana Times*, 4 February, <<https://astanatimes.com/2015/02/eurasian-integration-key-sustainable-development-eec-economic-minister-says/>>.
- Libman, A & Davidzon, I 2023, 'Military intervention as a spectacle? Authoritarian regionalism and protests in Kazakhstan', *International Affairs*, vol. 99, no. 3, pp. 1293-1312.
- Lucas, E 2023, 'Old at home, new(ish) abroad', *Center for European Policy Analysis*, 8 January, <<https://cepa.org/article/old-at-home-newish-abroad/>>.
- Lukashenko, A 2011, 'О судьбах нашей интеграции', *Izvestia*, 17 October, <www.iz.ru/news/504081>.
- Madiyev, E 2021, 'Turkic integration reaches new vistas after March 31 informal summit', *Astana Times*, 1 April, <<https://astanatimes.com/2021/04/turkic-integration-reaches-new-vistas-after-march-31-informal-summit/>>.
- Malik, BA 2019, 'Islam in Post-Soviet Kazakhstan: Experiencing Public Revival of Islam through Institutionalisation', *Asian Journal of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies*, vol. 13, no. 3, pp. 351-369.

- Mami, K 2013, 'Astana and Moscow form foundation of cooperation in Eurasia', *Astana Times*, 26 June, <<https://astanatimes.com/2013/06/astana-and-moscow-form-foundation-of-cooperation-in-eurasia/>>.
- Mekertychev, V 2015, 'Пятый Украинский фронт', *Tengrinews*, 10 April, <<https://tengrinews.kz/opinion/pyatyy-ukrainskiy-front-533/>>.
- Menon, R 2007, 'Introduction: Central Asia in the Twenty-First Century', in B Rumer (ed.), *Central Asia: Views from Washington, Moscow, and Beijing*, M. E. Sharpe, New York, pp. 3-17.
- Mostafa, G 2013, 'The concept of 'Eurasia': Kazakhstan's Eurasian policy and its implications', *Journal of Eurasian Studies*, vol. 4, no. 2, pp. 160-170.
- Nazarbayev, N 2011a, 'Евразийский Союз: от идеи к истории будущего', *Известия*, 25 October, <<https://iz.ru/news/504908>>.
- Nazarbayev, N 2011b, 'Интервью Президента Казахстана Н.А.Назарбаева информационным агентствам «РИА Новости» и «Интерфакс»', *Akorda*, 19 November, <https://www.akorda.kz/ru/speeches/external_political_affairs/ext_interviews/intervyu-prezidenta-kazahstana-nazarbaeva-informacionnym-agentstvam-ria-novosti-i-interfaks>.
- Nazarbayev, N 2012, 'Выступление Президента Республики Казахстан Нурсултана Назарбаева на юбилейной сессии СВМДА', *Akorda*, 12 September, <https://www.akorda.kz/ru/speeches/external_political_affairs/ext_speeches_and_addresses/vystuplenie-prezidenta-respubliki-kazahstan-nursultana-nazarbaeva-na-yubileinoi-sessii-svmda>.
- Nazarbayev, N 2013a, 'Выступление Президента Казахстана Н.А.Назарбаева на конференции министров иностранных дел стран-участниц Стамбульского процесса', *Akorda*, 26 April, <https://www.akorda.kz/ru/speeches/external_political_affairs/ext_speeches_and_addresses/vystuplenie-prezidenta-kazahstana-nazarbaeva-na-konferencii-ministrov-inostrannyh-del-stran-uchastnic-stambulskogo-processa>.
- Nazarbayev, N 2014a, 'Speech of the president of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev at the Lomonosov Moscow State University', *Akorda*, 28 April, <https://www.akorda.kz/en/speeches/external_political_affairs/ext_speeches_and_addresses/speech-of-the-president-of-kazakhstan-nursultan-nazarbayev-at-the-lomonosov-moscow-state-university>.
- Nazarbayev, N 2014b, 'Выступление Президента Казахстана Н.Назарбаева на церемонии подписания Договора о Евразийском экономическом союзе', *Akorda*, 29 May, <https://www.akorda.kz/ru/speeches/internal_political_affairs/in_speeches_and_addresses/vystuplenie-prezidenta-kazahstana-nazarbaeva-na-ceremonii-podpisaniya-dogovora-o-evraziiskom-ekonomicheskom-soyuze>.

- Nazarbayev, N 2014c, 'Выступление Президента Казахстана Н.Назарбаева на Четвертом саммите Совета сотрудничества тюркоязычных государств', *Akorda*, 5 June, <https://www.akorda.kz/ru/speeches/external_political_affairs/ext_speeches_and_addresses/vystuplenie-prezidenta-kazahstana-nazarbaeva-na-chetvertom-sammite-soveta-sotrudnichestva-tyurkoyazychnyh-gosudarstv>.
- Nazarbayev, N 2018, 'Выступление Главы государства Н.А.Назарбаева на I пленарной сессии «Построим будущее вместе: содействие инклюзивному росту и устойчивой взаимосвязанности» 12-го саммита Форума «Азия – Европа»', *Akorda*, 19 October, <https://www.akorda.kz/ru/speeches/external_political_affairs/ext_speeches_and_addresses/vystuplenie-glavy-gosudarstva-nazarbaeva-na-i-plenarnoi-sessii-postroim-budushchee-vmeste-sodeistvie-inklyuzivnomu-rostu-i-ustoichivoi-vza>.
- Nazarbayev, N 2019, 'Выступление Первого Президента РК – Елбасы Н.А. Назарбаева на открытии второго Форума международного сотрудничества «Один пояс, один путь»', *Akorda*, 29 April, <https://www.akorda.kz/ru/speeches/external_political_affairs/ext_speeches_and_addresses/vystuplenie-pervogo-prezidenta-rk-elbasy-na-nazarbaeva-na-otkrytii-vtorogo-foruma-mezhdunarodnogo-sotrudnichestva-odin-poyas-odin-put>.
- Ó Tuathail, G 1996, *Critical Geopolitics: the Politics of Writing Global Space*, Routledge, London.
- Oğuzlu, T 2012, 'Turkey's Eroding Commitment to NATO: From Identity to Interests', *The Washington Quarterly*, vol. 35, no. 3, pp. 153-164.
- Omelicheva, MY 2011, 'Islam in Kazakhstan: a survey of contemporary trends and sources of securitization', *Central Asian Survey*, vol. 30, no. 2, pp. 243-256.
- Ordabayev, S 2014, 'Building Eurasian Economic Union on consensus, mutual respect and benefit', *Astana Times*, 20 May, <<https://astanatimes.com/2014/05/building-eurasian-economic-union-consensus-mutual-respect-benefit/>>.
- Oshakbayev, R 2016, '"Братская Киргизия", "Средняя Азия" и прочие советизмы российской журналистики о Центральной Азии', *Tengrinews*, 14 April, <<https://tengrinews.kz/opinion/bratskaya-kirgiziya-srednyaya-aziya-prochie-sovetizmyi-592/>>.
- Putin, V 2011, 'Article by Prime Minister Vladimir Putin "A new integration project for Eurasia: The future in the making" ("Izvestia", 3 October 2011)', *Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the European Union*, 10 October, <<https://russiaeu.ru/en/news/article-prime-minister-vladimir-putin-new-integration-project-eurasia-future-making-izvestia-3->>.
- Rorlich, A-A 2003, 'Islam, Identity and Politics: Kazakhstan, 1990-2000', *Nationalities Papers*, vol. 31, no. 2, pp. 157-176.

- Rumer, E 2007, 'The United States and Central Asia: in search of a strategy', in B Rumer (ed.), *Central Asia: Views from Washington, Moscow, and Beijing*, M. E. Sharpe, New York, pp. 18-74.
- Sabayeva, G 2015, 'Border Does Not Divide Kazakhstan and China, But Brings Them Closer, Says Kazakh Ambassador in Beijing', *Astana Times*, 18 May, <<https://astanatimes.com/2015/05/border-does-not-divide-kazakhstan-and-china-but-brings-them-closer-says-kazakh-ambassador-in-beijing/>>.
- Sabitov, Zh 2018, 'Перезагрузка в Центральной Азии', *Tengrinews*, 16 March, <<https://tengrinews.kz/opinion/perezagruzka-v-tsentralnoy-azii-737/>>.
- Sagindikov, Y 2014, 'Moving toward Eurasian integration', *Astana Times*, 6 February, <<https://astanatimes.com/2014/02/moving-toward-eurasian-integration/>>.
- Shibutov, M 2012e, 'Как разные страны влияют на Казахстан', *Tengrinews*, 10 June, <<https://tengrinews.kz/opinion/kak-raznyie-stranyi-vliyayut-na-kazakhstan-303/>>.
- Svarin, D 2016, 'The construction of 'geopolitical spaces' in Russian foreign policy discourse before and after the Ukraine crisis', *Journal of Eurasian Studies*, vol. 7, no. 2, pp. 129-140.
- Tokayev, K-J 2016, 'Kazakhstan amidst four major transformations in Eurasia', *Astana Times*, 8 April, <<https://astanatimes.com/2016/04/kazakhstan-amidst-four-major-transformations-in-eurasia/>>.
- Токаев, К-Ж 2019, 'Выступление Президента Республики Казахстан Касым-Жомарта Токаева на заседании Совета глав государств-членов ШОС в расширенном формате', *Akorda*, 14 June, <https://www.akorda.kz/ru/speeches/external_political_affairs/ext_speeches_and_addresses/vystuplenie-prezidenta-respubliki-kazakhstan-kasym-zhomarta-tokaeva-na-zasedanii-soveta-glav-gosudarstv-chlenov-shos-v-rasshirennom-formate>.
- Токаев, К-Ж 2020, 'Выступление Президента Казахстана Касым-Жомарта Токаева на заседании Совета глав государств-членов ШОС', *Akorda*, 10 November, <https://www.akorda.kz/ru/speeches/external_political_affairs/ext_speeches_and_addresses/vystuplenie-prezidenta-kazahstana-kasym-zhomarta-tokaeva-na-zasedanii-soveta-glav-gosudarstv-chlenov-shos>.
- Токаев, К-Ж 2021, 'Выступление Главы государства Касым-Жомарта Токаева на неформальном саммите Совета сотрудничества тюркоязычных государств', *Akorda*, 31 March, <<https://www.akorda.kz/ru/vystuplenie-glavy-gosudarstva-kasym-zhomartatokaeva-na-neformalnom-sammite-soveta-sotrudnichestva-tyurkoyazychnyh-gosudarstv-312554>>.
- Tokayev, K-J 2022b, 'Speech by President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev at the Fourth Consultative Meeting of the Heads of States of Central Asia', *Akorda*, 16 September, <<https://www.akorda.kz/en/speech-by-president-kassym-jomart-tokayev-at-the-fourth-consultative-meeting-of-the-heads-of-states-of-central-asia-216535>>.

- Trenin, D 2007, 'Russia and Central Asia: interests, policies, and prospects', in B Rumer (ed.), *Central Asia: Views from Washington, Moscow, and Beijing*, M. E. Sharpe, New York, pp. 75-136.
- Tuimebayev, Z 2015, 'Kazakhstan-Turkey Strategic Partnership can serve as example', *Astana Times*, 16 April, <<https://astanatimes.com/2015/04/kazakhstan-turkey-strategic-partnership-can-serve-as-example/>>.
- Turebekova, A 2022, 'CSTO illustrates its efficiency in case of Kazakhstan', *Astana Times*, 13 January, <<https://astanatimes.com/2022/01/csto-illustrates-its-efficiency-in-case-of-kazakhstan/>>.
- Umarov, T 2022a, 'Kazakhstan is breaking out of Russia's grip', *Foreign Policy*, 16 September, <<https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/09/16/kazakhstan-russia-ukraine-war/>>.
- Umarov, T 2022b, 'Russia and Central Asia: never closer, or drifting apart?', *Carnegie Politika*, 23 December, <<https://carnegieendowment.org/politika/88698>>.
- Usenov, Zh 2017, 'Роль Казахстана в остросюжетном сериале под названием "мировая политика"', *Tengrinews*, 17 March, <<https://tengrinews.kz/opinion/rol-kazahstana-ostrosyujetnom-seriale-nazvaniem-mirovaya-658/>>.
- Usmanova, A 2014, 'Eurasian economic integration must go through thorough consideration', *Astana Times*, 18 February, <<https://astanatimes.com/2014/02/eurasian-economic-integration-must-go-thorough-consideration/>>.
- Wallerstein, I 1974, 'The rise and future demise of the world capitalist system: concepts for comparative analysis', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. 16, no. 4, pp. 387-415.
- Yemelianova, GM 2014, 'Islam, national identity and politics in contemporary Kazakhstan', *Asian Ethnicity*, vol. 15, no. 3, pp. 286-301.
- Zarycki, T 2014, *Ideologies of Eastness in Central and Eastern Europe*, Routledge, Milton Park, UK.
- Zhao, H 2007, 'Central Asia in China's diplomacy', in B Rumer (ed.), *Central Asia: Views from Washington, Moscow, and Beijing*, M. E. Sharpe, New York, pp. 137-214.
- Zhuravlev, A 2011, 'А оно нам НАТО? Новое прочтение', *Tengrinews*, 20 May, <<https://tengrinews.kz/opinion/a-ono-nam-nato-novoe-prochtenie-82/>>.
- Zhussupova, A 2021, 'Peace through engagement: the multi-vector direction of Kazakhstan's foreign policy', *Astana Times*, 9 March, <<https://astanatimes.com/2021/03/peace-through-engagement-the-multi-vector-direction-of-kazakhstans-foreign-policy/>>.

Appendix: Full data set

- Akylbayev, I 2021, 'The rise of Kazakh diplomacy: building bridges out of barriers. Five recommendations', *Astana Times*, 17 March, <<https://astanatimes.com/2021/03/the-rise-of-kazakh-diplomacy-building-bridges-out-of-barriers-five-recommendations/>>.
- Ali, Y 2021, '20 years of Shanghai Cooperation Organization: a view from Kazakhstan', *Astana Times*, 15 June, <<https://astanatimes.com/2021/06/20-years-of-shanghai-cooperation-organization-a-view-from-kazakhstan/>>.
- Altynsarina, E 2019, 'Kazakhstan and China: strengthening friendship and partnership in a new era', *Astana Times*, 15 September, <<https://astanatimes.com/2019/09/kazakhstan-and-china-strengthening-friendship-and-partnership-in-a-new-era/>>.
- Amrebayev, A 2022, 'Эксперт рассказал о перспективе казахстанско-китайских отношений', *Zakon*, 14 October, <<https://www.zakon.kz/6027416-ekspert-rasskazal-o-perspektive-kazakhstansko-kitaiskikh-otnoshenii.html>>.
- Amrebayev, A 2023, 'Казахстан – Китай: в преддверии нового "золотого тридцатилетия"', *Zakon*, 30 January, <<https://www.zakon.kz/6382902-kazakhstan--kitay-v-preddverii-novogo-zolotogo-tridtsatiletiya.html>>.
- Askaruly, A 2019, 'Central Asia should capitalise on opportunities for cooperation', *Astana Times*, 5 June, <<https://astanatimes.com/2019/06/central-asia-should-capitalise-on-opportunities-for-cooperation/>>.
- Babich, D 2020, 'President Tokayev addresses the SCO Summit: emphasizes collective responses to common threats', *Astana Times*, 13 November, <<https://astanatimes.com/2020/11/president-tokayev-addresses-the-sco-summit-emphasizes-collective-responses-to-common-threats/>>.
- Babich, D 2021, 'The Turkic World: opportunities instead of impediments', *Astana Times*, 3 April, <<https://astanatimes.com/2021/04/the-turkic-world-opportunities-instead-of-impediments/>>.
- Babich, D 2022, 'The most successful summit of 'Asian OSCE': how Astana became the diplomatic capital of Asia thanks to CICA', *Astana Times*, 14 October, <<https://astanatimes.com/2022/10/the-most-successful-summit-of-asian-osce-how-astana-became-the-diplomatic-capital-of-asia-thanks-to-cica/>>.
- Batalova, A 2021a, 'Астанинский процесс переехал в Сочи. Как это было', *Tengrinews*, 22 February, <<https://tengrinews.kz/opinion/astaninskiy-protsess-pereehal-v-sochi-kak-eto-byilo-1089/>>.
- Batalova, A 2021b, 'Изжил ли себя Астанинский процесс? Мнение', *Tengrinews*, 13 July, <<https://tengrinews.kz/opinion/izjil-li-sebya-astaninskiy-protsess-mnenie-1114/>>.

- Borbasov, S 2018, 'Cooperation with EU is source of development for Kazakhstan', *Astana Times*, 14 August, <<https://astanatimes.com/2018/08/cooperation-with-eu-is-source-of-development-for-kazakhstan/>>.
- Bugayenko, A 2018, 'Для чего Казахстан объединяет силы с Узбекистаном', *Tengrinews*, 28 March, <<https://tengrinews.kz/opinion/dlya-chego-kazahstan-obyedinyaet-silyi-s-uzbekistanom-741/>>.
- Decree No. 280 2020, *On the Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2020-2030*, 6 March, Nur-Sultan, <https://www.akorda.kz/en/legal_acts/decrees/on-the-concept-of-the-foreign-policy-of-the-republic-of-kazakhstan-for-2020-2030>.
- Decree No. 741 2014, *О Концепции внешней политики Республики Казахстан на 2014 – 2020 годы*, 21 January, Astana, available at <<https://adilet.zan.kz/rus/docs/U1400000741>>.
- Ezhenova, K 2018, 'Suleimen: BRI can help Kazakhstan attract investments not only from Singapore, but also from other countries in South-East Asia', *Astana Times*, 20 November, <<https://astanatimes.com/2018/11/suleimen-bri-can-help-kazakhstan-attract-investments-not-only-from-singapore-but-also-from-other-countries-in-south-east-asia/>>.
- Gadelshiyev, A 2017, 'Kazakhstan's efforts aimed at long-term stabilisation of Afghan situation', *Astana Times*, 27 October, <<https://astanatimes.com/2017/10/kazakhstans-efforts-aimed-at-long-term-stabilisation-of-afghan-situation/>>.
- Gubaydullina, M 2022, '"Держать руку на пульсе мировых перемен": политолог о значении G20 для Казахстана', *Zakon*, 16 November, <<https://www.zakon.kz/6030268-politolog-ob-predvaritelnykh-itogakh-sammita-g20-dlia-kazakhstana.html>>.
- Idrissov, E 2013, 'Regional integration is the 'key' to stabilising Afghanistan', *Astana Times*, 28 November, <<https://astanatimes.com/2013/11/regional-integration-key-stabilising-afghanistan/>>.
- Idrissov, E 2014a, 'Defining the contours of Kazakhstan's diplomacy up to 2020', *Astana Times*, 5 February, <<https://astanatimes.com/2014/02/defining-contours-kazakhstans-diplomacy-2020/>>.
- Idrissov, E 2014b, 'A new step forward to greater regional and global security', *Astana Times*, 13 May, <<https://astanatimes.com/2014/05/new-step-forward-greater-regional-global-security/>>.
- Karin, E 2014, 'Key security challenges in Central Asia', *Astana Times*, 6 February, <<https://astanatimes.com/2014/02/key-security-challenges-central-asia/>>.

- Karin, Y 2017a, 'Enhanced Kazakh-Uzbek relations offer opportunity for Central Asian regional cooperation', *Astana Times*, 19 September, <<https://astanatimes.com/2017/09/enhanced-kazakh-uzbek-relations-offer-opportunity-for-central-asian-regional-cooperation/>>.
- Karin, Ye 2017b, 'Визит Назарбаева в Ташкент. Почему это важно?', *Tengrinews*, 18 September, <<https://tengrinews.kz/opinion/vizit-nazarbaeva-v-tashkent-pochemu-eto-vajno-705/>>.
- Karin, E 2018, 'Central Asian leaders meeting represents unity, understanding', *Astana Times*, 21 March, <<https://astanatimes.com/2018/03/central-asian-leaders-meeting-represents-unity-understanding/>>.
- Kaukenov, A 2016, 'Is Kazakhstan able to bring together EAEU and EU?', *Astana Times*, 10 May, <<https://astanatimes.com/2016/05/is-kazakhstan-able-to-bring-together-eaeu-and-eu/>>.
- Kaukenov, A 2017a, 'Решение согласно условию. К 25-летию независимой внешней политики Казахстана', *Zakon*, 20 June, <<https://www.zakon.kz/4864945-reshenie-soglasno-usloviyu-k-25-letiyu.html>>.
- Kaukenov, A 2017b, 'СВМДА: в чем ценность для Азии и для Казахстана?', *Zakon*, 5 October, <<https://www.zakon.kz/4881632-svmda-v-chem-tsennost-dlya-azii-i-dlya.html>>.
- Kaukenov, A 2018a, 'Дежурный по Совбезу. Казахстанское председательство в СБ ООН', *Zakon*, 31 March, <<https://www.zakon.kz/4911215-dezhurnyy-po-sovbezu-kazahstanskoe.html>>.
- Kaukenov, A 2018b, 'Итоги 2018 года для казахстанской дипломатии', *Zakon*, 12 November, <<https://www.zakon.kz/4945616-itogi-2018-goda-dlya-kazahstanskoy.html>>.
- Kaukenov, A 2018c, 'Саммит государств ЦА: внешним игрокам не о чем беспокоиться', *Zakon*, 28 March, <<https://www.zakon.kz/4910673-sammit-gosudarstv-tsa-vneshnim-igrokam.html>>.
- Kaukenov, A 2018d, 'ШОС на новом этапе: что делать Казахстану?', *Zakon*, 8 June, <<https://www.zakon.kz/4922376-shos-na-novom-etape-что-делат.html>>.
- Kaukenov, A 2021, 'Мифы и реальность присутствия Китая в Казахстане', *Zakon*, 29 October, <<https://www.zakon.kz/5083732-mify-i-realnost-prisutstviya-kitaya-v.html>>.
- Kaukenov, A 2022a, 'Политолог рассказал о Шелковом пути в новых геополитических реалиях 2022 года', *Zakon*, 13 June, <<https://www.zakon.kz/6016948-politolog-rasskazal-o-shelkovom-puti-v-novykh-geopoliticheskikh-realiiakh-2022-goda.html>>.
- Kaukenov, A 2022b, 'Традиция дружить: как развивались отношения Казахстана и России', *Zakon*, 28 November, <<https://www.zakon.kz/6031449-traditsiya-druzhit-kak-razvivalis-otnosheniya-kazakhstana-i-rossii.html>>.

- Kaukenov, A 2022c, 'Центральная Азия и Индия: магистрали сотрудничества', *Zakon*, 26 January, <<https://www.zakon.kz/6005283-tsentralnaia-aziia-i-indiia-magistrali-sotrudnichestva.html>>.
- Kaukenov, A 2022d, 'Эксперт рассказал о развитии отношений между Казахстаном и Китаем', *Zakon*, 26 August, <<https://www.zakon.kz/6023183-razvitie-otnoshenii-kazakhstana-i-kitaia.html>>.
- Kaukenov, A 2022e, 'Эксперт рассказал о роли Турции в Центральной Азии', *Zakon*, 5 September, <<https://www.zakon.kz/6023947-ekspert-rasskazal-o-rol-i-turtsii-v-tsentralnoi-azii.html>>.
- Khudaibergenov, O 2015, 'Whether a common EAEU currency?', *Astana Times*, 23 March, <<https://astanatimes.com/2015/03/whether-a-common-eaeu-currency/>>.
- Kolpakov, A 2011a, 'Загадки Путина', *Tengrinews*, 20 October, <<https://tengrinews.kz/opinion/zagadki-putina-165/>>.
- Kolpakov, A 2011b, 'Звонки от Лукашенко', *Tengrinews*, 14 June, <<https://tengrinews.kz/opinion/zvonki-ot-lukashenko-96/>>.
- Kolpakov, A 2011c, 'Ответ Н. Назарбаева', *Tengrinews*, 26 October, <<https://tengrinews.kz/opinion/otvet-n-nazarbaeva-170/>>.
- Kolpakov, A 2011d, 'Холодная война на границах Казахстана', *Tengrinews*, 20 January, <<https://tengrinews.kz/opinion/holodnaya-voyna-na-granitsah-kazakhstana-24/>>.
- Kourmanova, A 2018, 'Central Asia: one region with many faces and common prosperity', *Astana Times*, 21 March, <<https://astanatimes.com/2018/03/central-asia-one-region-with-many-faces-and-common-prosperity/>>.
- Krivosheev, D 2019, 'Кривошеев: Единая валюта в ЕЭАС — это всего лишь информационный вброс', *Zakon*, 27 September, <<https://www.zakon.kz/4987822-krivosheev-edinaya-valyuta-v-eeas-eto.html>>.
- Kuanyshev, D 2022, 'Kazakhstan plays leadership role in development of military-political dimension of CICA', *Astana Times*, 22 July, <<https://astanatimes.com/2022/07/kazakhstan-plays-leadership-role-in-development-of-military-political-dimension-of-cica/>>.
- Kushkumbayev, S 2015, 'Kazakhstan's Nurlı Zhol and China's economic belt of the Silk Road: confluence of goals', *Astana Times*, 22 September, <<https://astanatimes.com/2015/09/kazakhstans-nurly-zhol-and-chinas-economic-belt-of-the-silk-road-confluence-of-goals/>>.
- Laumulin, Ch 2013a, 'À la guerre comme à la guerre?', *Tengrinews*, 4 June, <<https://tengrinews.kz/opinion/-la-guerre-comme-la-guerre-400/>>.
- Laumulin, Ch 2013b, 'À la guerre comme à la guerre? - 2', *Tengrinews*, 11 June, <<https://tengrinews.kz/opinion/-la-guerre-comme-la-guerre-2-403/>>.

- Laumulin, Ch 2013c, 'À la guerre comme à la guerre? - 3. Битва за Украину', *Tengrinews*, 3 December, <<https://tengrinews.kz/opinion/-la-guerre-comme-la-guerre-3-bitva-za-ukrainu-450/>>.
- Laumulin, Ch 2013d, 'Сирия: США vs РФ? Чем это нам грозит', *Tengrinews*, 20 September, <<https://tengrinews.kz/opinion/siriya-ssha-vs-rf-chem-eto-nam-grozit-424/>>.
- Laumulin, Ch 2014a, 'Большая Игра и создание ЕАЭС. À la guerre comme à la guerre?- 4', *Tengrinews*, 29 May, <<https://tengrinews.kz/opinion/bolshaya-igra-i-sozdanie-eaes-la-guerre-comme-la-guerre-4-493/>>.
- Laumulin, Ch 2014b, 'Крым и Большая Игра', *Tengrinews*, 3 April, <<https://tengrinews.kz/opinion/kryim-i-bolshaya-igra-482/>>.
- Laumulin, Ch 2014c, 'Майдан и Казахстан', *Tengrinews*, 25 February, <<https://tengrinews.kz/opinion/maydan-i-kazahstan-469/>>.
- Laumulin, Ch 2015, 'Сингапур и Казахстан', *Tengrinews*, 6 April, <<https://tengrinews.kz/opinion/singapur-i-kazahstan-532/>>.
- Li, Y 2015, 'Eurasian integration key to sustainable development, EEC Economic Minister says', *Astana Times*, 4 February, <<https://astanatimes.com/2015/02/eurasian-integration-key-sustainable-development-eec-economic-minister-says/>>.
- Madiyev, E 2021, 'Turkic integration reaches new vistas after March 31 informal summit', *Astana Times*, 1 April, <<https://astanatimes.com/2021/04/turkic-integration-reaches-new-vistas-after-march-31-informal-summit/>>.
- Mami, K 2013, 'Astana and Moscow form foundation of cooperation in Eurasia', *Astana Times*, 26 June, <<https://astanatimes.com/2013/06/astana-and-moscow-form-foundation-of-cooperation-in-eurasia/>>.
- Mekertychev, V 2015, 'Пятый Украинский фронт', *Tengrinews*, 10 April, <<https://tengrinews.kz/opinion/pyatyiy-ukrainskiy-front-533/>>.
- Nazarbayev, N 2011a, 'Евразийский Союз: от идеи к истории будущего', *Известия*, 25 October, <<https://iz.ru/news/504908>>.
- Nazarbayev, N 2011b, 'Интервью Президента Казахстана Н.А.Назарбаева информационным агентствам «РИА Новости» и «Интерфакс»', *Akorda*, 19 November, <https://www.akorda.kz/ru/speeches/external_political_affairs/ext_interviews/intervyu-prezidenta-kazahstana-nazarbaeva-informacionnym-agentstvam-ria-novosti-i-interfaks>.
- Nazarbayev, N 2012, 'Выступление Президента Республики Казахстан Нурсултана Назарбаева на юбилейной сессии СВМДА', *Akorda*, 12 September, <https://www.akorda.kz/ru/speeches/external_political_affairs/ext_speeches_and_addresses/vystuplenie-prezidenta-respubliki-kazahstan-nursultana-nazarbaeva-na-yubileinoi-sessii-svmnda>.

- Nazarbayev, N 2013a, 'Выступление Президента Казахстана Н.А.Назарбаева на конференции министров иностранных дел стран-участниц Стамбульского процесса', *Akorda*, 26 April,
<https://www.akorda.kz/ru/speeches/external_political_affairs/ext_speeches_and_addresses/vystuplenie-prezidenta-kazahstana-nanazarbaeva-na-konferencii-ministrov-inostrannyh-del-stran-uchastnic-stambulskogo-processa>.
- Nazarbayev, N 2013b, 'Интервью Президента Казахстана Н.А.Назарбаева китайским СМИ - информационному агентству Синьхуа, газете "Жэньминь жибао" и международному Радио Китая', *Akorda*, 5 September,
<https://www.akorda.kz/ru/speeches/external_political_affairs/ext_interviews/intervyu-prezidenta-kazahstana-nanazarbaeva-kitaiskim-smi-informacionnomu-agentstvu-sinhua-gazete-zhenmin-zhibao-i-mezhdunarodnomu-radio-kitaya>.
- Nazarbayev, N 2014a, 'Speech of the president of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev at the Lomonosov Moscow State University', *Akorda*, 28 April,
<https://www.akorda.kz/en/speeches/external_political_affairs/ext_speeches_and_addresses/speech-of-the-president-of-kazakhstan-nursultan-nazarbayev-at-the-lomonosov-moscow-state-university>.
- Nazarbayev, N 2014b, 'Выступление Президента Казахстана Н.Назарбаева на церемонии подписания Договора о Евразийском экономическом союзе', *Akorda*, 29 May,
<https://www.akorda.kz/ru/speeches/internal_political_affairs/in_speeches_and_addresses/vystuplenie-prezidenta-kazahstana-nnazarbaeva-na-ceremonii-podpisaniya-dogovora-o-evraziiskom-ekonomicheskom-soyuze>.
- Nazarbayev, N 2014c, 'Выступление Президента Казахстана Н.Назарбаева на Четвертом саммите Совета сотрудничества тюркоязычных государств', *Akorda*, 5 June,
<https://www.akorda.kz/ru/speeches/external_political_affairs/ext_speeches_and_addresses/vystuplenie-prezidenta-kazahstana-nnazarbaeva-na-chetvertom-sammite-soveta-sotrudnichestva-tyurkoyazychnyh-gosudarstv>.
- Nazarbayev, N 2018, 'Выступление Главы государства Н.А.Назарбаева на I пленарной сессии «Построим будущее вместе: содействие инклюзивному росту и устойчивой взаимосвязанности» 12-го саммита Форума «Азия – Европа»', *Akorda*, 19 October,
<https://www.akorda.kz/ru/speeches/external_political_affairs/ext_speeches_and_addresses/vystuplenie-glavy-gosudarstva-nanazarbaeva-na-i-plenarnoi-sessii-postroim-budushchee-vmeste-sodeistvie-inklyuzivnomu-rostu-i-ustoichivoi-vza>.
- Nazarbayev, N 2019, 'Выступление Первого Президента РК – Елбасы Н.А. Назарбаева на открытии второго Форума международного сотрудничества «Один пояс, один путь»', *Akorda*, 29 April,
<https://www.akorda.kz/ru/speeches/external_political_affairs/ext_speeches_and_addresses/vystuplenie-pervogo-prezidenta-rk-elbasy-na-nazarbaeva-na-otkrytii-vtorogo-foruma-mezhdunarodnogo-sotrudnichestva-odin-poyas-odin-put>.

- Nursha, A 2021a, 'Central Asia moves towards greater regional cooperation after successful third consultative meeting', *Astana Times*, 9 August, <<https://astanatimes.com/2021/08/central-asia-moves-towards-greater-regional-cooperation-after-successful-third-consultative-meeting/>>.
- Nursha, A 2021b, 'Extraordinary session of CSTO summit discusses dynamic situation in Afghanistan', *Astana Times*, 25 August, <<https://astanatimes.com/2021/08/extraordinary-session-of-csto-summit-discusses-dynamic-situation-in-afghanistan/>>.
- Omurzakov, T 2013, 'Kazakhstan and China share strategic goals', *Astana Times*, 3 May, <<https://astanatimes.com/2013/05/kazakhstan-and-china-share-strategic-goals/>>.
- Ordabayev, S 2014, 'Building Eurasian Economic Union on consensus, mutual respect and benefit', *Astana Times*, 20 May, <<https://astanatimes.com/2014/05/building-eurasian-economic-union-consensus-mutual-respect-benefit/>>.
- Oshakbayev, R 2016, "'Братская Киргизия", "Средняя Азия" и прочие советизмы российской журналистики о Центральной Азии', *Tengrinews*, 14 April, <<https://tengrinews.kz/opinion/bratskaya-kirgiziya-srednyaya-aziya-prochie-sovetizmyi-592/>>.
- Polonskaya, J 2015, 'Eurasian Economic Union Minister discusses competition, antitrust regulations', *Astana Times*, 23 April, <<https://astanatimes.com/2015/04/eurasian-economic-union-minister-discusses-competition-antitrust-regulations/>>.
- Sabayeva, G 2015, 'Border Does Not Divide Kazakhstan and China, But Brings Them Closer, Says Kazakh Ambassador in Beijing', *Astana Times*, 18 May, <<https://astanatimes.com/2015/05/border-does-not-divide-kazakhstan-and-china-but-brings-them-closer-says-kazakh-ambassador-in-beijing/>>.
- Sabitov, Zh 2018, 'Перезагрузка в Центральной Азии', *Tengrinews*, 16 March, <<https://tengrinews.kz/opinion/perezagruzka-v-tsentralnoy-azii-737/>>.
- Sagindikov, Y 2014, 'Moving toward Eurasian integration', *Astana Times*, 6 February, <<https://astanatimes.com/2014/02/moving-toward-eurasian-integration/>>.
- Saltybayev, Y 2018a, 'Cooperation prospects and security challenges for Central Asia', *Astana Times*, 13 March, <<https://astanatimes.com/2018/03/cooperation-prospects-and-security-challenges-for-central-asia/>>.
- Saltybayev, Ye 2018b, 'Выступление Путина и роль Казахстана как вменяемого игрока в Евразии', *Tengrinews*, 2 March, <<https://tengrinews.kz/opinion/vystuplenie-putina-rol-kazahstana-vmenyaemogo-igroka-732/>>.
- Shamishev, Y 2013, 'The path to security and stability in Eurasia', *Astana Times*, 8 November, <<https://astanatimes.com/2013/11/path-security-stability-eurasia/>>.
- Shibutov, M 2012a, 'Активы Великобритании в Казахстане', *Tengrinews*, 21 April, <<https://tengrinews.kz/opinion/aktivyi-velikobritanii-v-kazahstane-271/>>.

- Shibutov, M 2012b, 'Активы Китая в Казахстане', *Tengrinews*, 7 April, <<https://tengrinews.kz/opinion/aktivyi-kitaya-v-kazahstane-258/>>.
- Shibutov, M 2012c, 'Активы США в Казахстане', *Tengrinews*, 14 April, <<https://tengrinews.kz/opinion/aktivyi-ssha-v-kazahstane-265/>>.
- Shibutov, M 2012d, 'Глобальные тренды и Казахстан', *Tengrinews*, 2 March, <<https://tengrinews.kz/opinion/globalnyie-trendyi-i-kazahstan-242/>>.
- Shibutov, M 2012e, 'Как разные страны влияют на Казахстан', *Tengrinews*, 10 June, <<https://tengrinews.kz/opinion/kak-raznyie-stranyi-vliyayut-na-kazahstan-303/>>.
- Shibutov, M 2016, 'SCO transformation – are there any prospects?', *Astana Times*, 26 July, <<https://astanatimes.com/2016/07/sco-transformation-are-there-any-prospects-3/>>.
- Shibutov, M & Mustafin, A 2012, 'Активы Франции в Казахстане', *Tengrinews*, 31 March, <<https://tengrinews.kz/opinion/aktivyi-frantsii-v-kazahstane-253/>>.
- Tokayev, K-J 2016, 'Kazakhstan amidst four major transformations in Eurasia', *Astana Times*, 8 April, <<https://astanatimes.com/2016/04/kazakhstan-amidst-four-major-transformations-in-eurasia/>>.
- Токаев, К-Ж 2019, 'Выступление Президента Республики Казахстан Касым-Жомарта Токаева на заседании Совета глав государств-членов ШОС в расширенном формате', *Akorda*, 14 June, <https://www.akorda.kz/ru/speeches/external_political_affairs/ext_speeches_and_addresses/vystuplenie-prezidenta-respubliki-kazahstan-kasym-zhomarta-tokaeva-na-zasedanii-soveta-glav-gosudarstv-chlenov-shos-v-rasshirennom-formate>.
- Токаев, К-Ж 2020, 'Выступление Президента Казахстана Касым-Жомарта Токаева на заседании Совета глав государств-членов ШОС', *Akorda*, 10 November, <https://www.akorda.kz/ru/speeches/external_political_affairs/ext_speeches_and_addresses/vystuplenie-prezidenta-kazahstana-kasym-zhomarta-tokaeva-na-zasedanii-soveta-glav-gosudarstv-chlenov-shos>.
- Токаев, К-Ж 2021, 'Выступление Главы государства Касым-Жомарта Токаева на неформальном саммите Совета сотрудничества тюркоязычных государств', *Akorda*, 31 March, <<https://www.akorda.kz/ru/vystuplenie-glavy-gosudarstva-kasym-zhomartatokaeva-na-neformalnom-sammite-soveta-sotrudnichestva-tyurkoyazychnyh-gosudarstv-312554>>.
- Tokayev, K-J 2022a, 'Kazakhstan: A Bridge Between West and East', *Astana Times*, 15 September, <<https://astanatimes.com/2022/09/kazakhstan-a-bridge-between-west-and-east/>>.
- Tokayev, K-J 2022b, 'Speech by President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev at the Fourth Consultative Meeting of the Heads of States of Central Asia', *Akorda*, 16 September, <<https://www.akorda.kz/en/speech-by-president-kassym-jomart-tokayev-at-the-fourth-consultative-meeting-of-the-heads-of-states-of-central-asia-216535>>.

- Tokayev, K-J 2022c, 'Speech by the President of Kazakhstan, Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, at a meeting of the Council of Heads of State of the SCO Member States in an expanded format', *Akorda*, 21 July, <<https://www.akorda.kz/en/speech-by-the-president-of-kazakhstan-kassym-jomart-tokayev-at-a-meeting-of-the-council-of-heads-of-state-of-the-sco-member-states-in-an-expanded-format-2683815>>.
- Tuimebayev, Z 2015, 'Kazakhstan-Turkey Strategic Partnership can serve as example', *Astana Times*, 16 April, <<https://astanatimes.com/2015/04/kazakhstan-turkey-strategic-partnership-can-serve-as-example/>>.
- Turebekova, A 2022, 'CSTO illustrates its efficiency in case of Kazakhstan', *Astana Times*, 13 January, <<https://astanatimes.com/2022/01/csto-illustrates-its-efficiency-in-case-of-kazakhstan/>>.
- Ukibaу, A 2021, 'ЕАЭС, коронавирус и останки хана Кенесары. Итоги переговоров Назарбаева и Путина', *Tengrinews*, 2 July, <<https://tengrinews.kz/opinion/eaes-koronavirus-ostanki-hana-kenesaryi-itogi-peregovorov-1111/>>.
- Usenov, Zh 2016, 'Зачем Казахстану место в Совбезе ООН?', *Tengrinews*, 29 June, <<https://tengrinews.kz/opinion/zachem-kazahstanu-mesto-v-sovbeze-oon-608/>>.
- Usenov, Zh 2017, 'Роль Казахстана в остросюжетном сериале под названием "мировая политика"', *Tengrinews*, 17 March, <<https://tengrinews.kz/opinion/rol-kazahstana-ostrosyujetnom-seriale-nazvaniem-mirovaya-658/>>.
- Usmanova, A 2014, 'Eurasian economic integration must go through thorough consideration', *Astana Times*, 18 February, <<https://astanatimes.com/2014/02/eurasian-economic-integration-must-go-thorough-consideration/>>.
- Zhuravlev, A 2011, 'А оно нам НАТО? Новое прочтение', *Tengrinews*, 20 May, <<https://tengrinews.kz/opinion/a-ono-nam-nato-novoe-prochtenie-82/>>.
- Zhussupova, A 2021, 'Peace through engagement: the multi-vector direction of Kazakhstan's foreign policy', *Astana Times*, 9 March, <<https://astanatimes.com/2021/03/peace-through-engagement-the-multi-vector-direction-of-kazakhstans-foreign-policy/>>.

Non-exclusive Licence

I, Adam Ziogas, herewith grant the University of Tartu a free permit (non-exclusive licence) to the work created by me *Negotiating hegemony: the discursive construction of geopolitical space in Kazakhstani foreign policy*, supervisor Professor Viacheslav Morozov,

- reproduce, for the purpose of preservation, including for adding to the DSpace digital archives until the expiry of the term of copyright;
- to make the work specified available to the public via the web environment of the University of Tartu, including via the DSpace digital archives as of 15/05/2023 until the expiry of the term of copyright;
- I am aware of the fact that the author retains the aforementioned rights;
- I certify that granting the non-exclusive licence does not infringe other persons' intellectual property rights or rights arising from the personal data protection legislation.