

A. Bakhtiyarova^{1*}, Seyit Ali Avcu²

¹L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University, Kazakhstan, Nur-Sultan

²Ankara Yıldırım Beyazıt University, Turkey, Ankara

*e-mail: bakhtiyarova_aj@mail.ru

MIDDLE POWER BEHAVIOR DURING THE TRANSITION IN WORLD ORDER: THE CASE OF KAZAKHSTAN

While the global prominence of China has become indisputable, and Russia challenges the liberal world order because of geopolitical and historical necessities, the Western world is striving in every way to strengthen the liberal system through the economic, military and democratic institutions. This gives reason to believe that the world order is currently experiencing a deep crisis and transformation in a post-pandemic period. What scientists agree on is that the main issue of the modern international relations is the suspense of the future scenario and the positions of the actors within it.

However, it is beyond argument that the rise of multilateralism in world politics comes with the activation of middle power's diplomacy that is becoming more prominent. The diversity of middle power countries is explained by the fact that the current multipolar system has discouraged unilateralism, conferring the possibility for middle powers to have a voice and push for a negotiated resolution. Currently, in the world scientific environment, middle power states are considered in two categories: traditional middle powers, such as South Korea and Japan, and rising middle power states.

In this paper, we examine the middle power behavior during the world order transition by comparatively analyzing Kazakhstan's behavior with the rising and traditional mid-power states on the basis of empirical data. Kazakhstan might help to decrease the tension between the liberal world and the illiberal world by contributing to the mediation efforts.

Key words: new world order, liberal order, multipolar system, middle power

Ә.Ж. Бахтиярова^{1*}, Сейит Али Авджу²

¹Л.Н. Гумилев атындағы Еуразия Ұлттық Университеті, Қазақстан, Нұр-Сұлтан қ.

²Анкара Йылдырым Баязид университеті, Түркия, Анкара қ.

*e-mail: bakhtiyarova_aj@mail.ru

Әлемдік тәртіптің трансформациясы кезіндегі орта державаның мінез-құлқы: Қазақстан мысалында

Қытайдың жаһандық ықпалы даусыз болып, Ресей геосаяси және тарихи қажеттіліктерге байланысты либералды әлемдік тәртіпке қарсылық білдірсе де, Батыс әлемі либералды жүйені экономикалық, әскери және демократиялық институттар арқылы нығайтуын жалғастырып келеді. Мұндай ахуал пандемиядан кейінгі кезеңде терең дағдарыстағы әлемдік тәртіптің еселеп күрделенуіне негіз болып отыр.

Қазіргі халықаралық қатынастардың басты проблемасы әлемдік саясаттың болашақ сценарийінің белгісіздігі және ондағы мемлекеттердің ұстанымдары мен позициясының анық емес екендігінде. Алайда, әлемдік саясатты бойлаған көпполярлық орта державалар санатына енетін мемлекеттер дипломатиясының жандануына әкеліп отыр. Қазіргі таңда әлемдік ғылыми ортада орта деңгейлі мемлекеттер екі категорияда қарастырылған: дәстүрлі ұғымдағы Оңтүстік Корея және Жапон мемлекеттері сынды орта державалар және де жаңа әлемдік қарқынмен дамып келе жатқан орта деңгейлі мемлекеттер.

Бұл мақалада біз әлемдік тәртіптің трансформациясы кезіндегі дамып келе жатқан орта державаның мінез-құлқын Қазақстанның әлемдік сахнадағы саясатын мысалға ала отырып эмпирикалық деректер негізінде салыстырмалы түрде зерттейміз. Қазақстан медиатор ретінде либералдық әлем мен либералдық емес әлем арасындағы шиеленісті төмендетуге мүмкіншілігі бар деген тұжырымдаманы ғылыми тұрғыда анықтаймыз.

Түйін сөздер: жаңа әлемдік тәртіп, либералды тәртіп, көпполярлық жүйе, орта держава

А.Ж. Бахтиярова^{1*}, Сейит Али Авджу²

¹Евразийский национальный университет им. Л.Н. Гумилева, Казахстан, г. Нур-Султан

²Анкара Йылдырым Баязид Университет, Турция, г. Анкара

*e-mail: bakhtiyarova_aj@mail.ru

Поведение средней державы во время трансформации мирового порядка: на примере Казахстана

В то время как глобальное влияние Китая стало неоспоримым, а Россия бросает вызов либеральному мировому порядку из-за геополитических и исторических потребностей, Западный мир всеми силами стремится укрепить либеральную систему с помощью экономических, военных и демократических институтов. Это дает основания полагать, что мировой порядок в настоящее время переживает глубокий кризис и трансформацию в пост-пандемический период. В чем ученые сходятся во мнении, так это в том, что главной проблемой современных международных отношений является неопределенность будущего сценария и позиций действующих акторов в нем.

Однако бесспорно, что рост многополярности в мировой политике способствует активизации дипломатии средней державы, которая становится все более заметной. В настоящее время в мировой научной среде государства среднего уровня рассматриваются в двух категориях: средние державы в традиционном понимании, такие как Южная Корея и Япония, и развивающиеся государства среднего звена.

В этой статье мы исследуем поведение средней державы в период трансформации мирового порядка путем сравнительного анализа поведения Казахстана с растущими и традиционными государствами средней державы на основе эмпирических данных. Казахстан мог бы помочь снизить напряженность между либеральным миром и нелиберальным миром, внося свой вклад в посреднические усилия.

Ключевые слова: новый мировой порядок, либеральный порядок, многополярная система, средняя держава

Introduction

Surrounded by two great powers Kazakhstan has followed its own unique and thorny path of transformation. In the early 1990s, facing the unknown, the country set a course for multipolarity because of its bordering Russia to the north, China to the East, and other developing countries around itself. Once former US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice during the official visit to the country noted: “Kazakhstan has been a regional leader since its earliest days of independence” (Condoleezza Rice, 2005). After gaining independence, being on the verge of geopolitical chaos, and being a small country, Kazakhstan has become a rising middle power that increasingly strived for being visible in the worldwide policy. But on the other hand, natural resources have been the engine of these changes and became the central issue of powers’ Great Games. Over the last decade, the term new “Great Game” has acquired a meaning of interaction between the United States, Russia, and China for power and influence in Central Asia, including Kazakhstan. However, in the case where several great powers jockey for influence, the authority of any one state is weakening. This phenomenon is named the “multiple principals” problem, as organizational

theorists assert. Hereby, the presence of several dominant figures assists less powerful actors to wriggle out of an obligation to anyone power, weakening the control of these more powerful actors (Voorn, Genugten, Thiel, 2019).

Considering the aforementioned, we’ve faced the question of what changes we are experiencing today in international affairs? In recent times scholars agree that the system of international relations undergoes a crisis. This is why it has been growing interest in rethinking the global world order as well as positioning of countries within it, mainly Kazakhstan as a leading country in Central Asia. In this paper, we examine the middle power behavior during the transition in world order by analyzing Kazakhstan’s behavior during the last decade.

The theoretical and methodological basis of the research

The theoretical and methodological basis of the research is based on the basic provisions of the school of political neorealism by Kenneth Waltz, another ideological basis is the theory of offensive realism by John Mearsheimer. Although these schools have developed in the papers of various authors, they imply one motive: the conquest of

an increasingly powerful and dominant position in the world arena. But how is this possible in a new reality, when the existing liberal order is undergoing a deep transformation? This is becoming the central problematic issue faced by the entire world scientific community.

In order to prove our hypothesis in terms of Kazakhstan's position in a worldwide view, we essentially used a method of comparative analysis through the exploring of similarities and differences in the behavior of actors as well as studying the variables, indeed.

As a way to achieve our goal, the paper is constructed as follows. First, we will begin with the literature review on the nature of the new world order; second, we will explore the middle power behavior during the transition in World System; third, we will analyze the choices of Kazakhstan in new world order; in conclusion, we will analyze the foreign policy of Kazakhstan and try to define the perspectives of its relations with great and regional powers, considering all the benefits and threats.

Literature review: the nature of the new world order

Despite Western democracies strive to overcome multipolarity and maintain a hegemonic position in the modern world, they will no longer be able to oppose the peep of the dawn of new world order that is similar to economically and ideologically diverse. Although the United States was the most powerful state by the end of the Second World War as well as dominated after the disruption of the bipolar system, now other great powers are emerging that reflected restructuring of world order.

One of the key features of transforming world order is the deep economic and cultural interdependence that helps other countries to become more powerful, thus, it has caused the undermining of unipolarity and weakening of the liberal order. According to a leading scholar John Mearsheimer, the rejection of western liberal values by the fast-

growing China, and the resumption of Russian power has ended the unipolar era (Mearsheimer, 2019: 8).

Emerging of a multipolar system is accompanied by a geopolitical confrontation and a fierce competition for power. This is the reality that great powers face today. An accurate description of the current world order is given by Henry Kissinger who argues that several decades later after the collapse of the Soviet system, the United States is in less of a position to insist on the immediate realization of all its desires because other actors have grown into great power status. It seems as the US can neither withdraw from the world nor dominate it (Kissinger, 1994: 19).

What is more interesting, today's multipolar world seems contradictory: on one hand, the clash of civilizations provokes fragmentation of the world; on the other hand, the process of globalization is blurring borders. Hence, all of the major powers still care about the balance of power and are destined to compete for power in the foreseeable future. This implies the need to rethink all existing paradigms to define the world order we are living in.

In his work "World Order", Henry Kissinger defined the unfolding situation on the world stage as a threat in the face of all mankind. He emphasized that we are living in a historical period when there is a stubborn, at times almost desperate pursuit of a concept of world order that eludes common understanding. He was preoccupied with the question of whether we are entering a new period when the future will be determined by forces that do not recognize any restrictions or any order at all? And how can we define the position of every actor within the new world order (Henry Kissinger, 2015: 8-9)?

According to Mazarr *et al*, the order can be understood as either an input that can affect state behavior or an outcome of a stable and predictable position of affairs between states, as opposed to disorder or a state of war and violence as seen in Figure 1 (Mazarr, Priebe, Radin, Cevallos, 2016: 9).

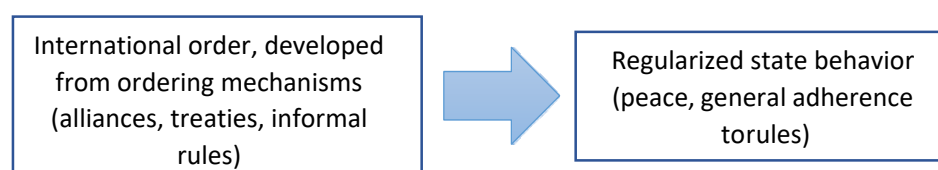


Figure 1 – Input and output of world order

Initially, the concept of “world order” was formed in Europe after thirty years of bloodshed in 1618-1648. After long religious strife and complete exhaustion, the warring countries got around the table in Westphalia to reach a mutually beneficial agreement. As a result, the Peace of Westphalia was achieved in 1648, ending the European wars and remained in history as a religious, territorial, and political settlement. This historical period in Europe seems close to describing the unfolding situation in modern international relations: a variety of political units, adherence to contradictory principles, ideological views, within which all actors are trying to find some “neutral” rules governing behavior and mitigating conflicts. This statement gives reason to believe that the Peace of Westphalia brings us closer to understanding today’s reality, where states recognize each other’s sovereignty and proclaim refraining from interfering in the internal affairs of independent states.

Nevertheless, how in practice the pursuit of the national interests of individual countries often goes beyond the proclaimed rules of international law as seen in the Ukrainian and Syrian crises. As an obvious example, the bifurcation point in Russian-West rivalry was the Crimean crisis in terms of which this stagnation was blamed almost entirely on Russian aggression, although it would be biased to blame only Russia for this crisis as Mearsheimer argues (Mearsheimer, 2014: 77). The West’s desire to withdraw Ukraine from Russia’s footprint, the expansion of NATO to the East has increasingly strained bilateral relations, having entered a new stage of development. This competition is asymmetrical and very unequal.

In global politics, the rivalry of great powers is not a new phenomenon, although in modern realities it requires a rethinking of all paradigms and an analysis of the fundamental concepts of the world order. History makes clear that great powers encountering often leads to global conflicts. Preventing this way out requires recognizing that liberal order cannot furnish global sustainability.

Richard Haass and Charles Kupchan argue that the global concert of major powers can stabilize an explosive situation that means a consolidated approach of leading countries in a way of peacekeeping. Therein, political inclusivity and procedural informality are the key characteristics of the emerging global landscape that could cover all the major powers in an informal platform as a consultative body. To be precise, inclusivity means the ability of influential states to negotiate

regardless of their regime type for avoiding destructive, especially violent, conflicts. In that way, great powers separate ideological differences over domestic governance from issues of international relations. The distinguishing feature of such a platform from the United Nations or other global actors is its informality. Official bodies are often stagnating due to disputes between veto-wielding permanent members of the UN Security Council. In contrast, an informal platform secures a private venue with a higher probability of consensus building. By providing a tool for sustained strategic dialogue, a global concert can mute and manage inescapable geopolitical and ideological differences (Haass, Kupchan, 2021).

In doing so, a global concert would cover the states that together represent almost 70 percent of global GDP and there are six such governments: the United States, China, Japan, Russia, India, and the European Union. We must admit that these major countries will be guided by realist principles implying hierarchy, state identity, and national interests. It means imminent discrepancy between powers, for this reason, the great powers keep options open for taking unilateral action in any way. Nevertheless, a global concert makes fruitful dialogue possible, and a new mechanism of world order devoted to great-power diplomacy could make this friction more controlled. What is more important, a global concert would provide the right to free speech and actions when it comes to internal governing.

To sum up, the need for a global concert is driven by the necessity to flatten a negative attribute of current international relations. It would be dangerously naïve to rely on the existing order when pretensions between great powers are increasing and new threats are sweeping the world.

Middle power behavior during the transition in world order

Although the world order is primarily shaped by the interaction between great powers, other states, especially middle powers influence the system by forming alliances with each other and great powers. In this section we explore the following questions: what is a middle power, what facts give us reason to believe that the state can be considered as a middle power country, what role they play during the transition in the world order? The concept of middle power is as old as modern international relations. It first emerged in Italy in the 16th century, where small states such as Venice and the took

intermediate positions between great powers, such as the Ottomans and the Habsburgs (Baç, 2017).

For determining the middle power concept, scholars attempted to distinguish between emerging and traditional middle power countries. Eduard Jordaan emphasized the main difference between emerging and traditional middle powers by their mutually-influencing constitutive and behavioral discrepancy. In terms of constitutive differences, traditional middle powers are socially and economically stable, egalitarian, and not regionally

influential. Meanwhile, in terms of behavior, they express identities distinct from powerful states in their regions and offer concessions to pressures for global reform. Conversely emerging middle powers are semi-peripheral and new democratic governments that display regional influence and readiness to reform global issues. Emerging middle powers demonstrate their commitment to regional integration processes, but they strive to build up identities that are different from those of weak countries in the region as seen in Figure 2 (Jordaan, 2003).

Traditional Middle Powers		Rising Middle Powers
CONSTITUTIVE DIFFERENCES		
Democratic tradition	Stable social democracies	Relatively unstable, recently democratized with some very undemocratic aspects
Time of emergence as middle powers	During the Cold War	After the Cold War
Position in the world economy	Core	Semi-periphery
Domestic distribution of wealth	Very equal	Highly unequal
Regional influence	Low	High
Origins of perceived neutrality	Regional ambivalence and relative unimportance	Regional self-association and significance
BEHAVIORAL DIFFERENCES		
Regional orientation	Fairly low	Moderately high
Attitude to the regional integration and cooperation	Ambivalent	Eager (often assuming leadership role)
Nature of actions to effect deep global change	Appeasing and legitimizing	Reformist and legitimizing
Purpose of international identity construction	Distance from powerful in region	Distance from weak in the region

Figure 2 – Distinguishing between Emerging and Traditional middle powers.

The foreign policy of middle powers often centers on decreasing conflicts in the world by cooperating with other like-minded states in an attempt to arrive at a workable compromise, usually through multilateral channels and institutions (Nossal, Stubbs, 1997). They are adherents of the stabilization of the world order, whether in a period of hegemony or multipolarity.

The foreign policy of middle powers is based on the junction of realism and constructivism in

terms of international relations theory. Utilizing soft balancing stems from realistic principles to defend national interests and mitigate external threats while constructing conditions for maneuvering. Realists scholars argue that the middle power's intentions to create a dialogue platform between great powers are a kind of hedging strategy permitting one to maneuver for own safety. In perspective, if the United States and China would equally dominate in the world arena configuring the bipolar system,

then, unlike during the Cold war, the geopolitical confrontation of two great powers will not permeate all countries of the world because of the middle power diplomacy.

Most middle power countries have a conflict of interest with China in terms of trade and economic imbalance and its rapid military expansion. In this case, it is appropriate to assert the middle power has been hedging against ever-growing China's power, knowing the risk of acquisition. The strength of medium-size countries is manifested in establishing long-term relations with the United States in the framework of investment, cultural and educational projects, in other words, relying on American soft power, which in turn also penetrates these countries with the main goal of deterring China or Russia from spreading influence. American support is seen as an efficient instrument in a security issue for middle powers towards rising China.

The other view asserts that one of the key advantages of being a middle power state is in its middle-ranked position in a hierarchy of power: they do not bear much responsibility for critical issues on the agenda of world politics. Meanwhile, they can play the role of mediator or peacekeeper with the help of diplomacy. History reminds us the best example of the middle powers' efforts to mediate conflict of interests between the great powers (Chaewkang You). Put differently, making a balance against the politics of great powers aims not to replace the role of major countries, but to transform the logic of power politics in a way of effective multilateral cooperation (Chun, 2016: 26).

In the research paper published by the Hague Center for Strategic Studies, Oosterveld and Torossian state that the importance of middle powers depends on how power is disseminated in the international system. Middle powers are countries that actively work to maintain and promote international law and thereby contribute to stable world order. They have the ability and influence to achieve these goals, making them important spearheads of international order. The middle powers are exceptionally advantaged. On the one hand, based on their economic and military might, they should not do hard work or take on global responsibility, as great powers do. However, they have enough power and influence to be able to pursue a normative foreign policy in which they can advance not only their interests but those of the wider community or even the global community.

Finally, the label middle power is valuable because it gives a certain degree of uprightness and indicates the country's good standing in the international community.

Several main features can be used to differentiate the modern middle powers. The first is the government must have the authority to influence the world discussions during negotiating. Next is the level of integration of the state into world politics and economy. The third is the diplomatic reputation and political will to support the rights of civil society around the world.

Oosterveld and Torossian apply the *five percent doctrine* to separate the middle powers from the great powers. If a country wants to be a great state it must own a dominant portion of the world's economy and military forces. There are five countries such as the United States, the Russian Federation, China, Germany, and Japan which individually hold at least 5 percent and collectively 54.2 percent of the world's power. The United States, China, and Japan stand out based on the size of their GDP, armed forces, and population, while India moves into the category of great power because of the big population. Permanent membership of the UN Security Council makes France and the UK to be considered the 7th and 8th great powers. To differentiate middle powers from small countries, three indicators have been considered: GDP, population, and military potential. As a result, fifty countries fall into the list of "potential middle powers" including the Republic of Kazakhstan as seen the Figure 3 (Oosterveld, Torossian, 2019).

There is no agreement about the definition of small, middle, or greater powers among international relations scholars. It is generally agreed, however, that they behave differently in the international arena. Here we have three types of scholars' groups with a different understanding of this issue: i) the first group believes that the measurement of the smallness or greatness of the state becomes possible based on the specific parameters; ii) scholars assume that the small or great status of the states is determined by the will of the world community; iii) scientists believe that the powerfulness of a country is directly determined by its behavior in the international arena. To give a wide berth the further discussions on the adequacy of measurements, scientists classified states related to quantitative and relational criteria (Petar Kurecic *et al*, 2017).

	Insufficient FHI Score (Not Free) and UNDP Contribution	Insufficient FHI Score (Partly Free) and UNDP Contribution	Insufficient FHI Score (Not Free)	Insufficient FHI Score (Partly Free)	Insufficient UNDP Contributions	Meet all criteria
GreatPower			China Russia			USA France UK India Japan Germany
MiddlePower	Emerging					Established
	Algeria Angola Iraq Kazakhstan Thailand Vietnam	Bangladesh Indonesia Malaysia Morocco Nigeria Pakistan Sri Lanka	Egypt Saudi Arabia Turkey United Arab Emirates	Colombia Kuwait Mexico Philippines Ukraine	Czech Republic Greece Poland Portugal Romania South Africa	Argentina Australia Austria Belgium Brazil Canada Chile Denmark Finland Italy Netherlands Norway Peru South Korea Spain Sweden Switzerland

Figure 3 – Middle Power and Great Power categories.

Therefore, scholars consider the types of international behavior stem from the classification. For instance, considering a country as a small state commonly means that this actor has no significant influence on worldwide policy and its opinion is ignored in global affairs. In turn, the middle power state, lying between small and big powers, is striving to become normative mediators and pursue compromise solutions in international disputes. These kinds of governments are proposed to expand their influence in regional and global governance. Middle power's diplomacy is focused on the foreign policy that demonstrates respect for international law, efforts to get together with like-minded actors for being a bridge between developed and developing states (Beeson, 2011).

Kazakhstan as a middle power in new world order

We have formed a middle power vision to research Kazakhstan's capability from the standpoint of diplomatic authority and its influence on the evolution of world politics. It was possible by analyzing Kazakhstan's initiatives since the independence and entering the world community, indeed.

Due to comprehensive analysis, we have identified three indicators substantiating the position

of Kazakhstan as a middle power state: i) diplomatic authority; ii) high integration into international communities; iii) providing humanitarian assistance to states in need. Despite Kazakhstan does not conform to the economic and military capacity as it can demonstrate great powers, the country contributes to peacekeeping in distant regions of the world (Nurshayeva, 2013).

Diplomatic authority. Kazakhstan has determined to involve world affairs peacefully. Back in 2014, ex-Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan Yeldar Idrissov made a confident statement in one of his interviews, thereby making it clear that Kazakhstan has reached a new level of development: "Kazakhstan's diplomacy has increased its potential and now we would like to extend its geographical influence and offer the world community Kazakhstan's experience to help solve global and regional issues" (Idrissov, 2014). In the world public perception, the government is already perceived as a serious and full-fledged participant of the world community. It was preceded by several initiatives to preserve peace and order in international affairs.

For instance, a round of Peace talks held in Astana, the capital of the country, in 2017 to conduct work toward a political resolution to the Syrian conflict once again showed the possibility of

Kazakhstan to act as a mediator in the world arena. This indicates the diplomatic authority of Kazakhstan led the countries to sit down at the negotiating table. Kazakhstan also pursued its national interests and attempted to improve its relations with Assad's leading international allies.

Hosting the OSCE summit in Kazakhstan in 2010 led the authoritative countries to combine their views on such dramatic issues as the Afghan crisis, nuclear non-proliferation all over the world, the dispute between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh, and so on. Powerful states and member countries of OSCE have met in Kazakhstani territory to combat regional and global threats. Despite being aligned with the powers, such as Russia and China that challenge the liberal world order, Kazakhstan has been acting like a liberal state in its international relations. These are some of the key cases that give reason to believe that Kazakhstan is quite a competent actor in Central Asia to call itself a middle power state.

High integration into international communities. For the modern world, it is very important to have a set of generally accepted rules that do not allow one political unit to subordinate all the others. This becomes possible within institutions that set the general trend of development and peaceful coexistence. Realizing this, Kazakhstan has always confirmed its commitment to integration processes.

In terms of involving in international organizations, a part of the United Nations, Kazakhstan held a nonpermanent seat on the UN Security Council in 2017-2018. It is a member of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and was the chairmanship of the OSCE in 2010. At the same time, Kazakhstan is a leading initiator of the Eurasian Economic Union, a member of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), and the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council. It is an active participant in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO) Partnership for Peace program. Kazakhstan founded the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA) (Bilateral Relations Fact Sheet, 2021).

Providing Humanitarian Assistance to States in Need. Kazakhstan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs created Kazakhstan Agency for International Development (KazAID), which geographical priorities covered the Central Asian countries and Afghanistan for promoting humanitarian assistance. Official development assistance is intended to contribute to the development of essential to life

sectors as healthcare and food security in recipient countries. It proves that Kazakhstan is transforming from a recipient of assistance to a regional donor. According to dates, over the last 20 years, Kazakhstan provided around 542 mln USD within official development assistance (KazAID, 2021).

Despite negative talks of skeptics that Kazakhstan does not need to provide humanitarian assistance to countries in need due to the presence of its problems inside the country, officials are convinced of the opposite. Chairman of the Committee on International Affairs, Defense and Security of the Mazhilis of the Parliament of the Republic of Kazakhstan Maulen Ashimbaev stated: "It should be borne in mind that official development assistance is not a charity. This is a flexible foreign policy tool for achieving specific foreign policy goals. Many OECD countries pursue such a policy, so official development assistance needs to be engaged in a meaningful, thoughtful and tied to the priorities of foreign policy" (Baimanov, 2017). Thus, since the COVID-19 pandemic spread around the world, Kazakhstan has repeatedly initiated humanitarian assistance to partner countries such as Kyrgyzstan and India. Apart from that, Kazakhstan annually allocates funds for foreign citizens from Russia, Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan to study at higher educational institutions.

The status of Kazakhstan as a middle power state in the region was pronounced in the latest concept of the Foreign Policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2020-2030 years: "The main influence on the formation of foreign policy concepts of mid-power states is exerted by systemic factors (events and trends at the global and regional levels that are directly reflected in the foreign policy agenda)" (akorda, 2020). Striving to enter the top world thirty developed countries Kazakhstan has repeatedly served as a platform for peace negotiations; maintaining preventive diplomacy and effective conflict resolution mechanisms. Having collected all the fundamental factors that make it possible to consider Kazakhstan as a middle power state, we analyze how Kazakhstan will interact with the great powers in the foreseeable future in the next section.

Kazakhstan and Great powers

The formation of a strong Kazakhstan would assist to restrict Chinese and Russian essential influence in the region. Kazakh authorities comprehending this challenge have employed primarily diplomatic initiatives. It helped Kazakhstan to turn on its

voice in the international arena and to get closer to powerful states. In this section, we consider bilateral relations of Kazakhstan with the United States, China, and Russia.

Kazakhstan-US. Most Western policymakers believe that the growing status of Kazakhstan in Central Asia has advanced American interests significantly. As Weitz stated: “Through its increasing economic engagement in Eurasia – which has involved both direct investment and trade as well as support for improving regional commercial and transportation infrastructure – Kazakhstan has helped transform Central Asia and the Caspian region into an “arc of opportunity” rather than an “arc of crisis” (Weitz, 2008: 123).

After the split of the Soviet Union, Kazakhstan has always been within the field of view of western diplomacy. The fact is the government was defined as an important factor in implementing the Eurasian strategy as a whole. Russia and China have a much greater influence on Kazakhstan than the United States. This is the reason why American policy should create a competitive advantage in its policy regarding the Kazakh vector. The United States should pay more attention to educational projects, environmental issues, health care, and freedom of the press. These are the components of effective “soft power” policy able to ensure long-term cooperation.

Kazakhstan-Russia. But the splicing of partnership with the West also has its lines: by deepening cooperation with American partners, Kazakhstan does not put in doubt its military-political obligations to Russia and the CSTO. As for the northern neighbor, the Russian vector remains the most important point of Kazakhstan’s foreign economic policy. This is due to the territorial proximity, energy, and transportation interconnection, the presence of common historical memory, and a deep connection of cultural heritage.

Bilateral relations are developing within the integrational institution such as Eurasian Economic Union. Even though Kazakhstan once initiated the creation of a common market in Eurasian space, nowadays Kazakh elite worries about trade imbalance in relations with Russia: Kazakhstan’s exports to Russia are decreasing, while imports from Russia are increasing. For example, in the first year of the EAEU’s functioning, the volume of Kazakhstan’s exports to the member countries of this union was at the level of \$4 billion 886.8 million, while imports in the opposite direction amounted to \$10 billion 885.4 million. Meanwhile, imports from Russia far exceeded the volume of Kazakhstan’s

exports to this country, amounting respectively to \$10 billion 232.4 million against \$4 billion 343.4 million, resulting in an impressive negative trade balance with it in minus \$5 billion 889.0 million (Askarov, 2021).

As a result, bilateral trade relations moved into the negative zone. This is one of the aspects Kazakhstan’s leadership should rethink because the deep economic dependence of the local market to Russia with all the negative consequences can lead to an imbalance in relations with other great or regional powers. For instance, Uzbekistan can be considered as a more appropriate object for American investments, because this country has observer status in Eurasian Economic Union and is less dependent on Russia.

Along with economic issues, there has been a possible threat for the Kazakh government triggered by the statements of state Duma deputy Vyacheslav Nikonov who outlined in one of his speeches about the non-existence of the Kazakh statehood. The majority of Kazakh society were peeved and have been still concerned, even though Russian officials assure their friendliness.

One another important issue in Kazakh-Russian relations is the language barrier for the Russian-speaking population. The dynamics of the domestic political processes have led to the change of guidelines and accents of the domestic political agenda: there is a trend to strengthen the role and place of the Kazakh language. This is a sovereign choice of Kazakhstan, but it also affects the Russian-speaking part of society. This is a trend that will also have an impact on relations between Russia and Kazakhstan.

Kazakhstan-China. The economic reforms initiated in a way of “socialism with Chinese specifics” at the end of the XX century gave a powerful impetus to China at the beginning of a new era, allowing the country to declare its ambitions on the Eurasian continent. And today we see how China actively explores the energy markets of neighboring countries, including Kazakhstan, diversifying continental transit routes to ensure energy security. Such behavior of the Eastern neighbor is also due to the geopolitical situation on the sea routes, where the presence of American naval forces compels China to find new ways of cooperation.

China is one of the five largest investors in Kazakhstan, accounting for 4.7 percent of the total investment in the Kazakhstani economy. In January-February of 2021, the trade turnover between China and Kazakhstan increased by 20 percent compared

to the same period in 2020, amounting to \$3.5 billion (Eurasian Bridge Kazakhstan, 2021). In addition to its economic relationship, Kazakhstan has become a reliable security partner for China over the past two decades, standing up to the three evil forces of separatism, extremism, and terrorism within Shanghai Cooperation Organization. As for the benefits for China from these bilateral relations, it is noteworthy to underline China's energy needs which are responded to by Kazakhstan's oil supplies.

In this point, it is important to understand that any government in certain initiatives primarily proceeds from its national interests, which inevitably leads to the emergence of external economic contradictions. For example, the commodity-heavy economy of Kazakhstan towards China makes it vulnerable and dependent. Therefore, today Kazakhstan has set a course to create a new model of economic development within the industrial and digital revolution. This means the exchange of scientific knowledge, the introduction of innovative technologies in production, the creation of land transit routes, etc. Thus, for two partners, the benefit lies in the development of new branches of cooperation that would allow the countries to coexist harmoniously.

As we see in the long term the Sino-Kazakh relations will continue to deepen due to several economic and political indicators. However, such a situation raises concerns as to the final determinants of Kazakhstan's foreign policy and whether official views reflect those of Kazakh society. If we consider this issue within neorealism it is abundantly clear that "middle power" states interacting with increasingly strong governments preferably choose a strategy of balance or in extreme cases – confrontation. Both of them are motivated by the same goal to provide greater security and the balancing theory has demonstrated today's Sino-Kazakh relations. The question of how the middle power state as the Republic of Kazakhstan could create relations with rising China leads to the inference that it will "be determined by the systemic distribution of capabilities rather than state-level characteristics such as the policy preferences of political elites" (Clarke, 2014: 142).

For cooperation between Russia and China in Central Asia, both countries have largely identical strategic and geopolitical interests. First, both sides are interested in countering the growth of non-traditional security threats. Secondly, Russia and China are not interested in strengthening the influence of a potentially hostile third force in the region. In strategic terms, Beijing considers the

post-Soviet space as a whole to be a fairly reliable rear for implementing its policy in the Asia-Pacific region (Laumulin, 2020: 291).

Conclusion

Within the new world order, the U.S. will stay as a great power even though American policymakers have to rethink their foreign policy paradigm because of other powers' rising with equal ambitions. Nevertheless, the U.S. will continue to nurture a powerful core of Western democracies with broadly shared interests and values, even as it seeks pragmatic cooperation with strategic adversaries on matters like nuclear weapons, global warming, and pandemics. The United Nations would stay as the world dialogue platform even it is incredibly difficult to make real change. Instead of disarming, the U.S. would reconsolidate existing alliances like NATO and political frameworks like the G-7, trying to attract India to the field of its influence.

One of the key parameters of Kazakhstan's stability for the next decades is the Great powers' investments attracted for economic development. There are American, Chinese, and Russian investments in Kazakhstan. And this fact will not allow the great powers to shake the country from the inside, it is not economically profitable.

In perspective Kazakhstan will continue its multi-vector foreign policy because of, first, its geopolitical location between Russia and China without the ability to access the world's seas. Second, destabilization of situations around Russia, due to the Ukrainian crisis and sanctions, could influence on political commitments of Kazakhstan's foreign policy because of the rise of the national identity and negative discussions in mass media about the people's concerns for the northern territories of Kazakhstan, despite the assurance of officials about Russian's respect for the territorial integrity of Kazakhstan. Third, American soft power will make a big contribution to the level of education of Kazakhstan's youth and people's cultural self-perception, which can consequently impact on deformation of Kazakhstan's foreign policy leading to a more strict position than being a middle power state. Fourth, the level of the country's commitment to science, and economic readiness to meet all the modern challenges, the political will of the elite to solve critical issues outside the government, and the geopolitical situation based on the interests of the major powers will determine the future of Kazakhstan as a middle power state.

References

- “Kazakhstan’s diplomacy: for cooperation with positive result for everyone”, interview of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan Y.A. Idrissov dated October 16, 2014. Retrieved from <http://mfa.gov.kz/index.php/ru/blog-ministra-1/intervyu-i-vystupleniya-ministra/2101-diplomatiya-kazahstana-za-sotrudnichestvo-s-polozhitelnym-rezulta-tom-dlya-vsekh>.
- “On the Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2020-2030”, Official Website of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Retrieved from https://www.akorda.kz/en/legal_acts/decrees/on-the-concept-of-the-foreign-policy-of-the-republic-of-kazakhstan-for-2020-2030.
- “On the Establishment of the Kazakhstan Agency for International Development “KazAID,”” Retrieved from <https://betaegov.kz/memleket/entities/mfa-tallin/news/details/o-sozdanii-kazahstanskogo-agentstva-mezhdunarodnogo-razvitiya-kazaid>.
- “The Trade Turnover Between Kazakhstan and China Showed a Historical Growth,” Eurasian Bridge Kazakhstan, retrieved July 30, 2021. Retrieved from <https://www.eurasian-bridge.kz/>.
- Askarov, T. (2021) “EAES: Chemodan bez ruchki”, *Vedomosti Kazahstana*. [EAEU: A suitcase without a handle”, *Vedomosti Kazahstan*.] Retrieved from <https://kazvedomosti.kz/article/eaes-chemodan-bez-ruchki/> (In Russian)
- Baimanov A. (2021) *Mazhilismen obyashil pomosch Kazahstana drugim stranam* [The Mazhilisman explained the assistance of Kazakhstan to other countries], *Kazinform*. Retrieved from https://www.inform.kz/ru/mazhilismen-ob-yasnil-pomosch-kazahstana-drugim-stranam_a3007294. (In Russian)
- Beeson, M. (2011) “Can Australia save the world?” *The limits and possibilities of Middle power diplomacy*, *Australian journal of international affairs*, pp. 563-577.
- Chaesung Chun (2016) “East Asian Security and South Korea’s Middle Power Diplomacy” in Sook Jong Lee (ed.), *Transforming Global Governance with Middle Power Diplomacy: South Korea’s Role in the 21st Century*, New York: Springer Nature, p. 26.
- Chaewkang You (n.d.) “Middle Powers, Norms, and Balancing: ROK’s and ASEAN’s Normative Balancing against Rising China”, from <http://web.isanet.org/Web/Conferences/CEEISA-ISA-LBJ2016/Archive/af8c46fb-30e2-4b6e-8aff-d4d36e0906dc.pdf>, p. 4.
- Clarke, M. (2014) “Kazakh Responses to the Rise of China: Between Elite Bandwagoning and Societal Ambivalence?,” in *Asian Thought on China’s Changing International Relations*, Niv Horesh and Emilian Kavalski (eds), New York, N.Y.: Palgrave Macmillan, p.142.
- Jordaan, E. (2003). “The concept of a Middle power in international relations: distinguishing between Emerging and Traditional Middle Powers”, *Politikon: South African Journal of Political Studies*, Vol. 30, No. 1, p. 165.
- Kissinger, H. (1994). “Diplomacy”, New York: Simon and Schuster, p. 19.
- Kissinger, H. (2015). *World Order: Reflections on the Character of Nations and the Course of History*. London: Penguin Books, p. 8-9.
- Laumulin, M. (2020) *Central’naya Aziya v epohu transformacii* [Central Asia in the Age of Transformation], *Kazahstanskii institut strategicheskikh issledovanii pri Pervom Prezidente Respubliki Kazahstan* [Kazakhstan Institute for strategic studies under the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan], Nur-Sultan, p. 291.
- Mazarr, M., Priebe, M., Radin, A., Cevallos, A. (2016) “Understanding the current international order”. California: RAND Corporation, p. 9.
- Mearsheimer, J. (2014). “Why the Ukrainian crisis is the West’s fault: the liberal delusions that provoked Putin”, *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 93, No. 5, p.77.
- Mearsheimer, J. (2019). “Bound to Fail: The Rise and Fall of the Liberal International Order”, *International Security*, Vol. 43, No. 4, p. 8.
- Müftüler Baç, M. (2017) “Middle Power”, *Encyclopedia Britannica*, Inc.
- Nossal K. and Stubbs R. (1997) “Mahathir’s Malaysia: An Emerging Middle Power?”, *Niche Diplomacy: Middle Powers after the Cold War*, ed. Andrew F. Cooper (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK), p.147–63.
- Nurshayeva, R. (2013) “Kazakhstan to join U.N. Peacekeeping for the first time”, *Reuters*, retrieved February 2018, from <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-kazakhstan-un/kazakhstan-to-join-u-n-peacekeeping-for-first-time-idUSBRE9BJ0BC20131220>.
- Oosterveld, W. and Torossian, B. “A balancing act: the role of Middle powers in contemporary diplomacy”, *Strategic Monitor* 2018-2019. Retrieved from <https://www.clingendael.org/pub/2018/strategic-monitor-2018-2019/a-balancing-act/>.
- Peter Kurecic et al. (2017) “Revisiting the definition of small state through the use of relational and quantitative criteria”, in Goran Kozina, Laura Juznik Rotar, and Daniel Tomic (eds.), *Nineteenth international scientific conference on economic and social development book proceedings*, Melbourne: Varazdin development and entrepreneurship agency, pp. 129-142.
- Rice, C. (2005) “Remarks at Eurasian National University”, *Archive of U.S. Department of State*. Retrieved from <https://2001-2009.state.gov/secretary/rm/2005/54913.htm>.
- Richard N. Haass and Charles A. Kupchan (2021) “The New Concert of Powers How to Prevent Catastrophe and Promote Stability in a Multipolar World”, *Foreign Affairs*, retrieved April 12, 2021, from <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/world/2021-03-23/new-concert-powers>.
- U.S. Relations with Kazakhstan, “Bilateral Relations Fact Sheet” (2021). Retrieved from <https://www.state.gov/u-s-relations-with-kazakhstan/>.
- Voorn, B., Marieke van Genugten, and Sandra van Thiel (2019) “Multiple Principals, Multiple Problems: Implications for Effective Governance and a Research Agenda”, *Public Administration*, January 22.
- Weitz, R. (2008). “Kazakhstan and the New International Politics of Eurasia”, *Central Asia-Caucasus Institute and the Silk Road Studies Program*, p. 123.