

# Role of Kazakhstan in Regional Cooperation in Central Asia, 1991-2010

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**Abstract – Among the most notable developments in current foreign affairs are regional collaboration and integration. Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, the Central Asian Republics, have joined large foreign organisations and agencies, such as the United Nations and the OSCE. However, in the sense of multilateral affairs in Central Asia (such as the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU), the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), the Silk Road Economic Belt, Central Asia plus the USA (C5 + 1), the EU Policy, Central Asia plus Japan, the Silk Road Economic Belt, Central Asia plus the USA (C5 + 1), there are obstacles, parallels and inconsistencies. Moreover, in Central Asia there is a connection between local – regional – global processes. Relevant local and international circumstances, as well as national and regional societies, traditions and ideologies, must be taken into consideration in definitions and explanations. The global world climate affects transitions. The present and potential development of Central Asia would be guided by the interconnection of local, international, trans-regional, and global issues and challenges.**

**Key Words: Regional, Cooperation**

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## INTRODUCTION

Kazakhstan, like every ex-Soviet state in Central Asia, is busy addressing its domestic and economic problems. This reality of their interest and strategy renders the present intra-Central Asian ties considerably different from the early years of independence, when their concerted approach and stance towards Russia was the secret to their survival amid their economic and political controversies. Given its few years of freedom and political and economic reliance on its neighbors, Kazakhstan today seems to be able to afford further economic and geopolitical programmatic policies.

Analysis of Kazakhstan's regional policy after its 'catapult to independence,' especially that of the last few years, reveals that its future foreign policy will dominate two major trends: developing economically beneficial interactions with neighboring countries and improving balanced (or counter-balanced) relations with Russia and China<sup>1</sup>. Kazakhstan appears to be well conscious of this, since it is a very big nation with a total region of more than 2.7 million square kilometers (km) spanning from 9th in the world. It has main importance in the post-Soviet space, having great potential for the economy. In 1991, with the dissolution of the USSR, this former Soviet republic became a sovereign owner of large wealth and economic assets. This opportunity and the rapid

speed of economic change, the high level of education of the people and its adaptability to intercultural contact with Russia and Western countries are the main explanations for Kazakhstan's claims to be a regional leader and a central participant in post-Soviet multilateral interstate cooperation. Kazakhstan was the most involved nation on the front lines of taking regional cooperation measures in Central Asia.

Kazakhstan is a moderately free community that favors change. Under President Nursultan Nazarbayev's leadership, however, the nation has been equally passionate in promoting regional collaboration in Central Asia to resolve issues that require joint efforts. This segment, centered on documentary sources, aims to examine the position of Kazakhstan in the regional agreement produced to tackle issues that involve joint concerted efforts and also examine the essence of Kazakhstan's foreign policy that enables Kazakhstan to play a relatively more active role compared to other countries. Thus the first conference of the Central Asian chief took place in Almaty on 23 June 1990, when the First Secretary of the Communist Party of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev, welcomed the Communist representatives of the Central Asian republics: Niyazov of Turkmenistan, Makhkamov of Tajikistan, Karimov of Uzbekistan and Masaliyev of Kyrgyzstan.<sup>2</sup> After the fall of the USSR, the newly

autonomous dictator took place. Regional councils convened at a summit in June 1990 to address local cultural, science, and environmental concerns, which became the first serious stage of institutionalizing regional cooperation. In January 1994, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan presidents signed bilateral agreements on the development of a single market, the elimination of customs checkpoints and the free crossing of borders for their peoples.

Kyrgyzstan also joined the 'Kazakhs Uzbek Union' later that year and the trilateral agreement was signed on 30 April 1994.<sup>3</sup> The three countries formed the Interstate Council of Foreign Ministers and the Council of Defense Ministers during the Almaty summit held on 8 June 1994. The Central Asian Bank for Cooperation and Growth was formed on 8 July 1994 to promote inter-state fiscal transactions, but in practice, most of these gestures of ardent friendship and cooperation merely remained on paper and the two republics pursued separate paths: Uzbekistan was more concerned with its domestic 'Islamist' opposition and actively participated in the T Interethnic partnerships, boundary conflicts, wealth separation etc. are no longer targets on the agenda. Coordinated initiatives are also required to counter foreign extremism, violence and illicit migration, including internal political turmoil, internal political instability in security and economic context, trade and economic problems. Today, for Shanghai union, which stretches its authority 'over more' and more representatives and concerns, and where Kazakhstan plays a similar active and expansionist position, a similar pattern seems true. In this regard, Nursultan Nazarbayev's declaration that the Shanghai union should also discuss ecological and humanitarian concerns apart from its political and economic problems and should improve its collaboration with other foreign and regional organizations.

### **KAZAKHSTAN'S ROLE IN POLITICAL AND SECURITY COOPERATION:**

Three distinct steps are seen in the study of the mechanism of regional collaboration in Central Asia from a political viewpoint. First stage is from the end of 1991 until 1994 alone. During this time, the Central Asian Republics made attempts to devise coordination structures amid the centrifugal patterns in the CIS. The second stage of regional cooperation has commenced in Central Asia since July 1994. A strong regional center was established, which Turkmenistan and Tajikistan did not join. In Central Asia, Turkmenistan has adopted a neutral stand on international politics, while Tajikistan has been embroiled in a brutal civil war. Third step of regional cooperation in Central Asia with Tajikistan started to display significant interest in regional relations in the period 1998 onwards. It should be remembered from a political viewpoint that the Almaty Declaration of December 1991 stressed the transparent existence of the cooperation programme. In addition to issuing

non-binding statements of intent, the three heads of state, namely Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, took effective steps by establishing an International Council composed of the Presidents and Premiers of the Member States. They agreed to set up the following forums in addition to establishing this ultimate executive body:

The Council of Premiers, which will meet four times yearly,

- Council of Ministers of Security,
- The Foreign Ministers' Council,

Of special interest is the decision to establish an Executive Committee headquartered in Almaty at the same time, which is an indicator of the deep commitment to regional cooperation. After 8 July 1994 the Committee started activities instantly. As the first chairman of the Body, the Interstate Council named Serik Primbetov, a Kazakh. Soon after the liberation of Central Asia, the President of Kazakhstan, Nazarbayev introduced a new coalition of the former republics, named the Euro-Asian Unity, which would be a confederation of twelve nominally autonomous former Soviet republics united under the CIS. However, this idea finds support only for other Central Asian chief, Akayev of Kyrgyzstan. Kazakhstan's international cooperation has grown not only in the area of defense, but also in the area of development. After the first days of independence, sovereign Kazakhstan's foreign policy has centered on strengthening post-Soviet integration processes within the context of the CIS, Eurasian Economic Cooperation (EEC) and Central Asian Economic Group (CACO). 185 bilateral and trilateral arrangements have generally taken the form of security cooperation, or have been sought within the context of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). This chapter will deal with the position of Kazakhstan in depth. Effective success in cooperation on security concerns removes one significant challenge to greater regional cooperation, which may be the foundation for cooperation in other fields.

### **KAZAKHSTAN'S ROLE ON ECONOMIC FRONT**

In economic globalization, regional economic collaboration is part of the pattern. The advent and prominence of institutions and foreign trade agreements, such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the Alliance of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the European Union (EU), among others, suggest that global convergence is going ahead by regionalization. Economic cooperation can take several different forms. It may imply a mere bilateral trade deal between two countries on tariffs and trade barriers,

or full-scale convergence of single currencies, labour markets, and economic policies, as exists in Western Europe; Cooperation on trade concerns in Central Asia is the same as the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), the Organisation for Economic Cooperation (ECO), the Central Asian Economic Community (CAEC), the Central Asian Cooperation Association and the Transport Corridor Europe Caucasus Asia (TRACECA), as well as a comprehensive account of the position of Kazakhstan in that cooperation. In the field of commerce, there are different forms of regional collaboration structures.

Trade controls between member countries are lifted in a free trade agreement (FTA), but each nation maintains its own tariff system against outsiders.<sup>17</sup> A mutual union includes a free trade region combined with popular foreign trade policies. A common market is a customs union which allows the free movement of development factors as well. Finally, an economic union is a single market which requires a degree of harmonization of the member states' national economic policies.<sup>18</sup> Central Asian states have been predominantly interested in free trade and customs union initiatives. In view of the geopolitical situation of the world at the center of the Eurasian plateau and its vast deposits of mineral raw materials and hydrocarbons, enhancing regional economic cooperation is vitally necessary for Kazakhstan. Macroeconomic stability has had a beneficial influence on investment development in the economy.

A growth in demand has occurred. The government is assigning importance to building an industrial complex geared towards exports. Kazakhstan puts greater focus on drawing international investments. Kazakhstan is vigorously training itself for WTO membership. Long-term goal for President Nursultan Nazarbayev is economic development focused on the concept of a market economy. It needs accelerated integration of global trading networks, the entrance of commodities, services and capital markets into the country, and the use of the advantages of foreign labor division. Its multilateral commitment to facilitating the more productive and equitable running of the global economy is of critical significance in this sense. For the purposes of creating a single economic space in the territories of three Central Asian states, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, a joint action program has been adopted which provides for the harmonization of national legislation, the establishment of a free trade zone and the solution of the problems of currency regulation and inter-bank regulations.

#### **KAZAKHSTAN'S ROLE IN ARAL SEA BASIN PROGRAMME WATER-ENERGY CONSORTIUM:**

With this set of interlinked systemic concerns in a time of economic and political change, regional

politicians and various external observers have cited a partnership between Central Asia's water problem and regional stability as being under stable. The controversy linked to water relies as much on political interests as on quantitative variables. While most water conflicts are settled by mediation, water has become part of high-level politics in regions (including Central Asia) where shortage and rivalry are severe, and the likelihood of water-related conflict is rising. Cooperation on water problems is possible so far as broader political gaps can be controlled. A very complicated issue of water management became a very complex problem of Transboundary water management with the fall of the USSR. In the 1992 Almaty Deal, the newly independent republics soon recognized that the water problem in the region could be addressed efficiently only by integration and collective cooperation of action.

Kazakhstan is an active participant country in the creation of a range of institutional frameworks, the Interstate Coordinating Water Commission (ICWC), subordinate Amu Darya and Syr Darya B Speaking at the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea Summit in Almaty on 28 April 2009, Nursultan Nazarbayev, President of Kazakhstan said, "I want to reassure that amid the global economic downturn, Kazakhstan does not intend to avoid operating at the Aral Sea." He recalled that the ASBP was being initiated with active funding from the World Bank and Asia and EU programmes. The restoration of the Syr Darya dam and the building of many facilities for water production in Kazakhstan have been completed. Future initiatives involve the design of the Sary Shagan Zaliv facility.

Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan are adequately endowed with hydrocarbons; Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan have ample capacity for hydroelectric power generation. Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan have ample capacity for hydroelectric power generation. In Central Asia, these natural services may be accessed easily in the consumer mechanism, whereby the electricity supply is non-interruptible. In this regard, the President of Kazakhstan has recently announced his proposal to create a Central Asian Energy Grid and Energy Protection Council aimed at enhancing Central Asia's energy connection with other regions, including South Asia, thus fostering a regional and international network for energy security.

#### **OBJECTIVE**

1. To study the past two years, a new wind of regionalism has swept across Central Asia.

2. The fear of secessionism was the main reason behind Shanghai five objectives of regional co-operation in military sphere.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

After Central Asian countries became independent just two decades ago, it is normal that there would be a shortage of material in the region. Much of the content you use is in posts, commentaries, media interviews, and online analysis. Some books were published, too. As before, a thematic analysis of this content is being attempted. The Mechanism of Regional Cooperation in Central Asia-Position, Issues and Viewpoints After the advent of independent Central Asian states, there has always been a temptation to push for regional cooperation among the region's countries.

Akiner, Shireen (2005), claims that during periods of emergency, there was still a readiness in the Central Asian States to collaborate with each other. That was because many of the governments shortly following independence found themselves in a tenuous situation. Because they felt it required teamwork. The states have realized, apart from mere life and protection, the need for cooperation in many fields such as culture, climate, infrastructure, etc.

This is more of a literature. Over the last two decades, UNDP studies have emphasized regional collaboration in Central Asia to help handle resources such as crude, water, minerals, etc. Being landlocked and far from the world's markets, it was crucial that they set up some sort of framework for cooperation. Byrd, William, and Martin Raiser (2006), assume timing and organizing their actions to optimize the effectiveness of their growth policies is much easier for the nations of the region. They also stress the role of the private sector, civil society and the media in fostering Central Asian regional cooperation. There are several studies that explore the problems of regional collaboration more thoroughly. Wietz, Richard (2008), addresses the state of regional cooperation in Central Asia, as well as the numerous concerns concerning the cooperation phase. These involve electricity, customs, transportation, facilities, control of boundaries, etc. Different foreign organizations have also taken a particular interest in Central Asia's integration process. This were primarily from the West and advocated for a market-oriented, modern method. Linn, Johannes F (2007) explores the position of different organisations, such as the IMF, and the involvement of Western nations in Central Asia's regional integration process. Wietz, Richard (2008), also addresses the role played by numerous international and global organisations in Central Asian regional cooperation. 5 It would be important to see what course or course the mechanism of Central Asian collaboration and integration would follow. Can it adopt the direction of developed

regions such as the EU or ASEAN or develop its own model.

Muzaparova, L.M. (2001), tackles this problem and thinks that Central Asia would more definitely adopt a course of free trade towards customs integration before embarking towards a complete economic integration. Kaushik, Devendra (2000), provides this phase with a systematic timeline across different regional organizations and changing incorporation among those organizations. However, certain essential requirements such as a certain amount of agreed boundaries, trade dependencies and shared understanding of threats are important to fully start off regional cooperation. In the case of Central Asia, Sabirov, M.N (2004), outlines in depth the required requirements and requirements for regional integration and cooperation. It's not as though this process is not fraught with issues. There have been plenty, and there will be many a few disputes, scandals and bickering in the future.

Sengupta, Anita (2001), points out that the region's water conflicts would be the biggest barriers to regional integration in Central Asia. This is seen by the utter lack of cooperation and comprehension of the problems of the Aral Bay, Amu Darya, Syr Darya, etc., displayed by the states of the area. On the other side, Firdous, Tabasum (2009), talks about the border problems and challenges that arise from Afghanistan as likely to worsen cooperation in that area. In addition, Kaushik, Devendra (2000), suggests that there would be an issue in the mechanism of ego conflicts between the oppressive Heads of States. In this area the rivalry between Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan and Karimov of Uzbekistan is almost legendary.

## ROLE OF KAZAKHSTAN IN REGIONAL COOPERATION IN CENTRAL ASIA

It is widely known that Kazakhstan has been at the forefront of Central Asia's regional cooperation activities from the very beginning. Kazakhstan has been more involved than other republics in the region, whether it supports multilateral organizations or at the bilateral level. The literature accessible attests to this truth, too. Muzaparova, Leila (2001), notes that after the disintegration of the Soviet Union, Kazakhstan was the first country to ask for "civilized divorce." The Kazakh leadership recognized from the very beginning the need for regional coordination between the citizens of Central Asia. Wietz, Richards (2008), also agrees with this statement and says that Kazakhstan's political circles have always felt the need for regional collaboration, and they understood the value of a better developed area. Wietz then goes on to clarify in depth the different steps taken by Kazakhstan to facilitate regional cooperation.

He says that Kazakhstan has attempted such a platform in the Eurasian area and sees the opportunity for economic union together with Russia's involvement. The accessible literature mentions a variety of explanations for Kazakhstan's zeal for regional collaboration, and its imperatives for the same. Laumulin, Murat (2008), states that Kazakhstan, as the region's geostrategic hub, has a vital role to play in Central Asian integration. Being the region's largest country in terms of land and sharing boundaries with all but one nation in the region, Kazakhstan's fate has been politically guided by international cooperation. Kazakhstan is the region's most industrially industrialized states. This is also one explanation why it is calling for regional partnership. Katik, Mevlut (2006), believes that the regional and foreign movement of labour, investment and technology in the country is most reliant on Kazakhstan. Martin C. Spechler. (1997), says Kazakhstan would most benefit from expanded business and economic room in a more competitive area. Its enterprises will profit enormously from the economies of scale offered by an industrialized area in terms of production and distribution.

It has therefore often been a strong supporter of the region's economic union. A further explanation why Kazakhstan is aiming for a more prosperous zone is foreign investment. Bobokulov, Inomjon (2006), claims that regional collaboration would promote international investment and profit Kazakhstan most because it is the region's most established economy. Finally, in order to take full advantage of its phenomenal export ability for energy products, Kazakhstan has placed its eyes on greater interaction with the global economy. Kukeyeva, Fatima and ZhulduzBailova (2008 ) point out that Kazakhstan has a concrete rationale for regional cooperation in Central Asia and that Kazakhstan is considering this mechanism as a tool of broader interaction with the global economy. Kazakhstan, being on its path to growth, knows that as the country around it lags so far behind, it will not afford to do so. It then sees its growth being driven by the development of the whole country.

Abazov, Rafis (2005), brings specifics of this argument up. He assumes that Kazakhstan recognizes that it cannot stay oblivious to issues and challenges arising from the area and thus it is constantly searching for ways to integrate the country in order to facilitate mutual growth and stability. Syroezhkin, Konstantin (2001), further reflecting on the security element, notes that Kazakhstan has always wanted to provide some kind of joint security agreement in the area and has always been alive with the region's challenges and has also realized that these may be better handled by regional cooperation.

Besides this, its international partnership policy often gelled well. The query, however, is whether Kazakhstan is capable of being the driver of regional cooperation in Central Asia. The nation with an

estimated GDP of roughly US\$ 120 billion and a greater gdp than all other Central Asian republics placed together. It's still good enough to be the most prosperous of Central Asian countries economically. For this cause there is a general scholarly opinion that Kazakhstan is capable of leading the mechanism of regional cooperation in Central Asia. Wietz, Richards (2008), says Kazakhstan is easily the region's leader with its big economy, and has the means to foster regional collaboration and provide leadership in this respect. Taking this point further, Tai, Simon W, and Jung Wan Lee (2009 ) claim that Kazakhstan has the region's prime opportunity to drive for political unification in Central Asia on the back of its immense regional economic force and influence.

This sure will translate into the weaving potential of economic growth in the region. Supporting this point Libman, Alexander (2009), elaborates that Kazakhstan's economic domination of the region and the role played by the multinationals corporations of Kazakhstan in the region along with their capacity to attract migrant labor from throughout the region will be a major factor in the possible integration of this region. The problem of migrant labour is one where, for some time, the nations of Central Asia have been interested in establishing a cooperative system. Mohanty, Arun (2008), adds to his position as Kazakhstan's financial force in the region in the process of economic integration. In this phase, he focuses on the significance of Kazakh Banks.

## CONCLUSION

This study seeks to resolve some information gaps regarding the mechanism of regional cooperation in Central Asia and the position of Kazakhstan. Regional collaboration has been regarded in most research as a general mechanism in the area. This analysis would aim to map out why Kazakhstan is actually advocating for this mechanism in a deliberate way, as a strategy and not as a problem-by-issue mechanism. It also seeks to find out precisely what Kazakhstan can benefit from this phase as regards enhanced stability, economic growth and diplomatic ability. Up to now, surveys have continued to focus on the gains that the area as a whole would reap. This will also aim to position Kazakhstan's development initiatives in the context of its own national needs, the expectations of its establishment and the ability of its institutions to serve its leadership function. For the purpose of our analysis, we selected the duration from 1991 when Kazakhstan arose as an independent nation to 2010, along with other Central Asian republics, as an effort to bring this analysis as up-to - date as the supply of content permits.

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