

Analysis of Kazakhstan's Foreign Policy under the Russia Ukraine War with Realism——A Comparison of Ukraine

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Abstract. Kazakhstan is the biggest landlocked country in the world and plays an important role in Central Asia. It used to belong to the USSR like Ukraine, which shares some similarities with Kazakhstan in the aspect of history, the relation with Russia and so on. After the 24th of February in 2022, when the Russia Ukraine war has begun, whether Kazakhstan could be the next Ukraine has become a topic under debate. In this article, the possibility and Kazakhstan's condition as well as its foreign policy are analysed. Furthermore, realism, one of the three main theories in the international relations is used to explain and predict the behaviour of Kazakh's government. Result indicates that Kazakhstan is less possible for it to be involved in a war like Russia Ukraine war. However, Kazakhstan may seek a more "multi-vector" way in its foreign policy which can be proved in its cooperation with other countries like China and Turkey in the aspect of economy and military and so on.

Keywords: Kazakhstan, Realism, Russia Ukraine war, Foreign policy.

1. Introduction

On February 24, 2022, the President of Russia, Vladimir Putin announced in a speech to the Russian people that he had decided to launch a special military operation in the Donbass region and had sent troops to there. Later, explosions and fight happened in Kiev, Kharkiv, Odessa and other cities in Ukraine, which means that the war between Russia and Ukraine has officially started.

Conflicts and disputes between countries undoubtedly increase the pressure on the people of the countries involved. All industries in the war zone will be affected and will face stagnation. This will lead to a devastating loss of wealth. The properties, highways, airports and railways will be the strategic targets which leads to the basic living materials such as water, electricity, network, and logistics be completely paralyzed. Rising prices, lack of supplies, traffic paralysis are devastating to the public. In addition to the economic impact, the most serious impact of war on people lies in the psychological panic. When the war is start, there's always huge ideological pressure and mental breakdown. At that time, nothing could be done to ensure their safety. People are full of fear. Trade wars and economic sanctions between countries will also bring considerable pressure to the public. By imposing tariffs, reducing quotas and other measures to suppress the import and export trade of enemy countries, every part suffers in terms of GDP, trade, investment, reputation and credibility. The people in these countries face unemployment pressure.

Therefore, how countries survive in the world, has become a very necessary research topic. In this article, the author will use the 'realism' theory of the three major theories of international relations to specifically analyze the main reasons for the Russian-Ukraine conflict and analyze the specific goals that different countries (such as Russia, Ukraine and Kazakhstan) seek to achieve. Through the analysis of the causes of the event, it can provide experience and theoretical reference for the survival of countries in the globalization environment. The authors will point out the forecasted future of Kazakhstan.

Farid Zakaria is one of the representatives of the realism theory of international relations. The core view of his government-centered realism is that the power of the government affects the expansion of the state. His representative work *From Wealth to Power: The Unusual Origins of America's World Role* [1], takes the United States as a case to analyze the key significance of government power in the expansion of the United States.

Mearsheimer's *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* is a masterpiece of realist theory of international relations, pushing the theory to a higher level, and is a classic work of realist theory in international politics. In *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, Mearsheimer mainly points his own theory of international politics, that is, the realist theory of international relations. The book mainly focuses on why countries compete for power and pursue hegemony. Mearsheimer remind people that in a world where there is no international authority to rule other countries, great powers will always seek power at the expense of others and try to protect their own security by becoming a dominant state [2]. In this process, conflicts will inevitably arise among great powers, which is the tragedy of power politics.

2. Literature review

The Republic of Kazakhstan, referred to as Kazakhstan, is a landlocked country located in Central Asia and the largest landlocked country in the world. The name of the country comes from its main ethnic group, the Kazakhs. Located in central Asia. It is bordered by Russia to the north, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Kyrgyzstan to the south, the Caspian Sea to the west, and China to the east. On February 2021, the population of Kazakhstan is 19,003,300. There are about 140 ethnic groups, of which 68% are Kazakhs and 20% are Russians.

In Kazakhstan, the highest state executive body exercises the executive power of the Republic of Kazakhstan and its activities are accountable to the President. The current government was formed in September 2016. Bakht Jean Sagintayev became Prime Minister. There are 15 ministries under the government. The political situation in Kazakhstan is stable, and there are three main political parties: the "Light of the Fatherland" Party, the Kazakh Communist People's Party, and the "Bright Path" Democratic Party.

Kazakhstan owns a lot of natural resources so that Kazakhstan's economy mainly relies on oil, natural gas, mining and coal. It is rich in natural resources. At present, the total proven oil reserves in Kazakhstan are 10 billion tons, coal reserves are 3.94 billion tons and the number of the reserves for natural gas reaches 1.8 trillion cubic meters, and manganese reserves are 400 million tons. Due to the influence of the former Soviet Union, market economy and privatization haven't been formed in Kazakhstan until after independence.

Kazakhstan's economy is dominated by petroleum, mining, coal and agriculture and animal husbandry. In 2020, Kazakhstan's GDP is 169.837 billion US dollars, a year-on-year decrease of 2.6%, the industrial output value is 45.93 billion US dollars, a year-on-year decrease of 0.7%, and the agricultural output value is 15.191 billion US dollars, a year-on-year increase of 5.6%.

As the earliest and most deeply influenced country in Central Asia by Russia, Kazakhstan has basically maintained harmonious and stable inter-ethnic relations since its independence, and has accumulated relatively successful experience in regulating the consciousness of Russian ethnic groups in the country. Based on the actual situation of the ethnic population in Kazakhstan, realizing the unity of ethnic identity and national identity will be the only way for Kazakhstan to solve the domestic ethnic problem [3].

After the independence of Kazakhstan, it made an in-depth analysis of the actual domestic situation and the international situation it faced, and based on this, a foreign strategy of balanced diplomacy was formulated, that is, to actively develop friendly and cooperative relations with many countries and international organizations, and to better to safeguard Kazakhstan's national interests [4].

Facing the current increasingly complex domestic and international situation, Kazakh President Tokayev, upholding the principles of pragmatism, bilateral and multilateralism, and with the goal

of safeguarding national security, enhancing international status and improving the interests of the people, formulated the Kazakhstan 2020 - The foreign policy of 2030 reflects the continuity, economicalization, democratization and diversification of diplomatic means of foreign policy, and opens up broad prospects for Kazakhstan's foreign exchanges [5].

3. Basic information of Kazakhstan and Ukraine

3.1 Kazakhstan

Kazakhstan, also known as Republic of Kazakhstan, is the biggest landlocked country in the world, mainly located in Central Asia in the south and west of Russia. The country occupies an important position economically and politically in Central Asia, taking up 60% GDP by its vast mineral resources especially through oil and gas industry.

The Kazakh Khanate was established in 1465. In the early 17th century, the Kazakh Khanate was divided into three parts, which are the Great, Middle and Little hordes, with the impact of tribal rivalries. In 1936, the Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic, which was a full union republic of the USSR, was made by the Kazakh Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic. Kazakhstan became the last Soviet republic to declare independence on 16 December 1991, ten days before the disaggregation of Soviet Union.

3.2 Ukraine

Ukraine is located in Eastern Europe, having the second largest territory and long national borders with Russia. The human activity can be seen from the Old Stone Age within the border of Ukraine. After the Mongol invasion in 1240, Ukraine was later absorbed by the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and the Kingdom of Poland. In 1654, by the Pereiaslav Agreement, Ukraine's military and political alliance with Russia that acknowledged loyalty to the Russian monarch was formed. The Declaration of State Sovereignty of Ukraine was adopted by Supreme Soviet of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist on 16 July 1990. After that, the Ukraine declared its independence on 24 August 1991.

In addition, that lack of manifestation of the Russian element in Ukraine had its limits. Many Russians and Ukrainians related to Russian culture and language, voted for the independence of Ukrainian from Russia while not support the exit of Ukraine from Russia's sphere in Western Europe's favour [6].

3.3 The Russians in Kazakhstan and Ukraine

From the above we can see that both of the two countries share borders with Russia, and both of them were belonged to the USSR before. And both of the two countries have some effect in the area (Central Asia and Eastern Europe) politically.

According to the population of the Republic of Kazakhstan which is published by the Kazakh government, the proportion of Russian in Kazakhstan decreased from 28% in 2010 into 17.94% in 2022. A policy of the country that promotes Kazakh language and culture was adapted by Kazakh government. Especially the language policy, the Kazakh government took the Kazakh as the official language while designated Russian unofficially as the interethnic communication. Hence, these policies contributed to the reduction in Kazakh. It is still worth mentioning that, the Russian in Kazakh still plays an important role in Kazakhstan's public, military, cultural and economic life.

The situation is quite different in Ukraine. The Russians in Ukraine is the second largest nation with approximately 17%. The population is far less than the Ukrainian which takes 77.5% in Ukraine. However, the geographical distribution has become one of the problems. From the west to the east, the proportion of Russian increased gradually. And more than half of the people in Crimea are belonged to the Ukraine.

4. Analysis of Kazakhstan's current foreign policy with realism

From a realistic perspective, Kazakhstan has maintained a relatively conservative diplomatic attitude for a long time. Politically, Kazakhstan is a relatively weak group at the international level, and its international discourse power and comprehensive strength are insufficient to establish regional influence. Therefore, its best diplomatic attitude is to maintain a harmonious atmosphere with all large-scale subjects and establish cooperative relations (economic and political) as far as possible. These political factors have led Kazakhstan to adopt a balanced approach at the international level and try not to conflict with other countries. However, in the context of the recent conflict between Russia and Ukraine, Kazakhstan's political position was forced to vote to a certain extent. Kazakhstan did not recognize that Russia recognized the two eastern regions of Ukraine as independent countries, nor did it recognize that Crimea belonged to Russia, because it violated the Charter of the United Nations. Kazakhstan's position on the Russia Ukraine conflict is relatively vague. Nur Sultan's government maintains good relations with Kiev and invites all parties to the war for dialogue, and tries to protect its own security [6]. At the St. Petersburg Economic Forum organized by Moscow, President Tokayev of Kazakhstan made it clear that he did not intend to recognize Lugansk in eastern Ukraine as independent territories and would listen to Western sanctions against Moscow. Kazakhstan seems to have angered Moscow, and some Russian politicians have warned Kazakhstan's leaders that the "Ukrainian scenario" will become a reality, resulting in the conflict between diplomatic and trade relations. Maintaining a conservative political position while maintaining autonomy, and then stabilizing the domestic political environment and public sentiment as much as possible, are the common solutions and attitudes of developing countries such as Kazakhstan in dealing with international conflicts.

After Russia invaded Ukraine, the Kazakh government tried to maintain a neutral position. The President of Kazakhstan, Tokayev, talking about his country's position: "should proceed from the critical need to ensure the security sovereignty and territorial integrity of our state" [7]. As Aliya Askar said, "Whether Kazakhstan broadly agrees with Putin and his policies or not, the country cannot openly support or condemn Russia." However, the views of Kazakhstan's citizens (and people in Central Asia) are more widely fluctuating: Although Kazakhstan does not have reliable opinion polls on how public opinion views the war, there are many Russian supporters and opponents. For example, some drivers put "Z" signs on their cars to show their support for Russia, while the authorities of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan have fined drivers with "Z" labels. As the war in Ukraine continues, Kazakhstan will face increased political and economic pressure. The two are members of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), which may impose sanctions on Kazakhstan if Western politicians decide to pursue Russia's partners next. Diplomatic mediation may or may not have an impact, which means that Kazakhstan's foreign policy may be difficult, which will lead to greater risks in domestic politics. Although Kazakhstan faces Russia's unfriendly attitude, it objectively lacks countermeasures against Russia. On the basis of realism, its main objective is to take its own development as the center and minimize the impact of conflicts on the domestic environment. The premise of this principle is to ensure national autonomy. In the international arena, Kazakhstan needs to establish more international relations and carry out cooperation at multiple levels, so as to gain chips in the political game. There are many possible modes in the implementation of this program, among which international trade and market cooperation are the most common and rapid.

As a developing country, Kazakhstan has been restricted by the relatively single type of energy and has been pursuing trade transformation. It must maintain a very close partnership with major countries, especially with all neighboring countries and Western countries to maintain mutual trust, which is also a long-term priority for Kazakhstan. After the conflict, Russia imposed direct economic sanctions and targeted Kazakhstan at the trade level. Kazakhstan's original major energy exports, including but not limited to coal and other mineral resources, were restricted, and its exports in the international market were significantly reduced. A district court in Russia's biggest Black Sea port — ordered a pipeline coming from Kazakhstan and exporting oil to Europe shut for a month. Economic difficulties have prompted Kazakhstan to find new allies and trade relations, which is also

an important purpose of reality. In most cases, Kazakhstan focuses on its own development, so trying to find support in the international community they chose to cooperate more with European countries and the western economic system. Under the current situation of Ukrainian war, it is noticeable that international energy market was greatly influenced and thus caused damage to our economic environment. EU would like to increase the crude oil import amount from Kazakhstan with a relatively lower price. Recently, the crazy growth of coal procurement in Kazakhstan occurred against the background that the European embargo on Russian coal supply came into effect in August. From January to May, Kazakhstan supplied 1.5 million tons of coal to EU countries, almost twice that of 2021. After the outbreak of the Russian Ukrainian war, Kazakhstan's monthly coal exports to the EU soared to 350000-400000 tons. Also, Kazakhstan and the European Union reached an agreement on the collection of the carbon tariff, which is reduced to \$20 per ton of carbon emissions. In order to make up for Kazakhstan's losses, EU members should take the initiative to import more crude oil from Kazakhstan and adjust the energy import structure. Many EU countries import Russian crude oil. The agreement stipulates that Kazakhstan's crude oil import proportion will be increased. All these signs show that the European market and mainstream representatives have accepted Kazakhstan under the conflict between Russia and Ukraine. When the old trade relations under the geographical relationship are destroyed, countries in other regions seek opportunities to build new cooperation. Kazakhstan is willing to accept this change in international relations from its own position. When its own interests are destroyed, the actual relationship between Kazakhstan and Russia has evolved into a zero sum game, and the win-win economic relationship with major European countries will increase its voice over Russia. Without participating in the direct conflict between Russia and Ukraine, Kazakhstan can introduce other partners to have an impact on Russia's international reputation, and constantly ask its new partners to put pressure on the Russian government, so that Russia can reassess its interest considerations in imposing sanctions on Kazakhstan and rebuild a multi-party balance in the game. This way of indirect influence avoids direct confrontation with a powerful political economy, while constantly improving its voice and ensuring sovereignty through added value. This series of actions of Kazakhstan is an international common plan in line with the principle of realism, and is also a conservative and rational choice.

Also, China, Kazakhstan and the European Union have reached an agreement to jointly build the Caspian corridor economic belt, connecting China, the European Union and Kazakhstan. As a trading body, Kazakhstan uses this pipeline to prevent Russia from imposing sanctions on its original transportation pipeline. Through this corridor, China continues to carry out its the Belt and Road initiative and conduct economic exchanges with coastal countries. The EU can obtain low-cost crude oil from Kazakhstan through the pipeline to prevent the oil demand of EU countries from being unsatisfied due to sanctions from Russia or other international turbulence, which is beneficial to all three parties. The three parties need to work together to open up the economic belt in terms of infrastructure assistance, foreign port construction, transportation policy environment and so on. Further negotiation is required for specific details

5. The predictions about the Kazakhstan's foreign policy

The absence of government in international society makes the difference from domestic politics. This is the so-called anarchy to be considered by the realists. In the condition of anarchy, a common rule-making and enforcing authority is absent, and thus the sovereign states in international society need to rely on themselves. Therefore, it is responsible for each country to ensure their survival and pursue power for their own interests. Hence, anarchy makes a situation in which in which power has the overriding role in shaping interstate relations [8].

As mentioned above, the politics in international society is different from that of domestic society, which is regulated by a sovereign power [9]. Under the situation of anarchy, there is no government has a kind of power to direct a sovereign state to do something in the international society. In the case of Kazakhstan, neither Russia nor EU and other western countries have the right to force Kazakhstan

to do the things that its government is not willing to do. Hence, the main thing that the Kazakhstan government should take into consideration is its own interest instead of accepting the opinion from other countries. Combine with the above materials, Kazakhstan will continue its "multi-vector" foreign policy (a triangulation between the major powers of Russia, China and the US.). The Kazakhstan government has especially been patient with Russia, for their special relation in history and economy and so on. However, this kind of tolerance maybe not last for long. There is a trend that the Kazakhstan government is seeking ways to reduce the impact from Russia. For its sanctions made to Russia on the early of this year and cooperate with Turkey to the level expanded in strategic partnership and approved military intelligent protocol. From this cooperation, it seems that Tokayev is taking measures like collaborate with other countries like Turkey to alleviate its dependences on Russia in the field of military. Besides, Kazakhstan also expanded its cooperation with EU in the area of energy while its output to Russia was decreased in this year. In addition, Kazakhstan also joined the One Belt One Road program raised by China. What's more, the Caspian corridor economic belt built by Kazakhstan, EU and China is also promote the export of Kazakhstan which can alleviate the impact from Russia after the Russia Ukraine war.

The security becomes a central issue in the view of realists, as they envision the world of states as anarchic. States try to increase their power and engage in power-balancing for the purpose of deterring potential aggressors to attain security [10]. At the same time, the morality to international politics in realism is skeptical. Unrest was suddenly erupted in Kazakhstan which was different from other common events since Kazakhstan's 30 years independence which was eventually expanded into the field of politics. When things got really out of hand, Russian-led Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) helped Kazakhstan. Although Putin helped Tokayev to save his domestic problem, there is still no obligation for Tokayev to return back which can be explained as the less of morality and the pursuit of countries own interest in realism. The things like Tokayev did not recognize the Lugansk in eastern Ukraine as independent territory which is against the Kremlin's willingness maybe happen in the future. From this prospective, the Kazakhstan may beef up its "multi-vector" foreign policy in the future in case of its alleviation of Russia's impact.

6. Conclusion

As the biggest landlocked country in the world, Kazakhstan is dominating in central Asia. It has kept a "multi-vector" foreign policy especially after the Russia Ukraine war. Under the circumstances of Russia Ukraine war, this article analyses whether the Kazakhstan could be the next Ukraine and the change in its foreign policy with Ukraine and Russia. Though Kazakhstan shares some similarities with Ukraine, it is less possible for it to be involved in a war like Russia Ukraine war. What's more, there is a trend which indicates that the Kazakhstan government is seeking a more "multi-vector" way in its foreign policy which can be proved in its cooperation with other countries like China and Turkey in the aspect of economy and military and so on. Finally, it is predicted that the Tokayev is and will take measures to alleviate the impact from Russia in many fields with the analysis of realism.

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