

## US-Kazakhstan Relations Post Nur Sultan Nazabayev

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### Abstract

Nursultan Nazarbayev's departure from the presidency in Kazakhstan, the dynamics of U.S.-Kazakhstan relations have experienced both continuity and adaptation. The long-serving leader, Nazarbayev, played a pivotal role in shaping the strategic partnership between the two nations. However, with the transition to a new leadership under President [insert current president's name], there has been a recalibration of diplomatic priorities. The United States continues to engage with Kazakhstan in areas of mutual interest, including energy cooperation, regional security, and economic development. The Central Asian nation's strategic geographic location makes it a key player in promoting stability in the region. The U.S. has shown a commitment to supporting Kazakhstan's efforts in diversifying its economy and attracting foreign investments. At the same time, the post-Nazarbayev era has prompted a reassessment of bilateral ties. The new leadership's domestic and foreign policy decisions, as well as its approach to governance, will influence the trajectory of U.S.-Kazakhstan relations. Both countries have an opportunity to deepen cooperation in emerging global challenges such as climate change, cybersecurity, and healthcare, providing a foundation for a dynamic and evolving partnership in the years to come.

### Introduction

The post-NursultanNazarbayev era in Kazakhstan marks a significant juncture in the bilateral relations between the United States and the Central Asian nation. NursultanNazarbayev, the founding father of independent Kazakhstan and its leader for nearly three decades, played a pivotal role in shaping the country's foreign policy, economic strategies, and geopolitical positioning. With his departure from the presidency, a new chapter has unfolded, bringing both continuity and adaptation to the diplomatic ties between the U.S. and Kazakhstan. Nazarbayev's legacy in fostering strong relations with the United States laid the groundwork for strategic cooperation, particularly in the realms of energy, security, and economic development. The United States has been a key partner in supporting Kazakhstan's efforts to navigate its post-Soviet transition and emerge as a stable and prosperous nation. Nazarbayev's adept diplomacy

and leadership established Kazakhstan as a crucial player not only in Central Asia but also on the global stage.

As Kazakhstan transitions to new leadership under President [insert current president's name], the U.S. faces the task of recalibrating its engagement strategies. The post-Nazarbayev period necessitates an examination of evolving political dynamics, policy priorities, and the direction in which Kazakhstan seeks to steer its future. This juncture presents both challenges and opportunities for fostering a robust partnership that aligns with the interests and aspirations of both nations.

The geopolitical landscape, regional security concerns, and the global economic environment all contribute to the evolving narrative of U.S.-Kazakhstan relations. Against this backdrop, the United States is likely to continue its engagement with Kazakhstan in areas of shared interest, such as energy cooperation, counterterrorism efforts, and economic diversification. Simultaneously, the changing leadership in Kazakhstan opens avenues for exploring new avenues of collaboration and addressing emerging global challenges. This essay will delve into the nuances of post-NursultanNazarbayev U.S.-Kazakhstan relations, analyzing the continuities and adaptations in the diplomatic landscape and forecasting potential trajectories for this pivotal partnership.

### **Need of the Study**

The study on post-NursultanNazarbayev U.S.-Kazakhstan relations is crucial due to its implications for regional stability, global geopolitics, and economic cooperation. NursultanNazarbayev's departure from the presidency represents a significant shift in Kazakhstan's political landscape, raising questions about the continuity of established diplomatic ties and the potential evolution of the nation's foreign policy. U.S.-Kazakhstan relations in this post-Nazarbayev era is essential for policymakers, analysts, and diplomats. The bilateral relationship has far-reaching consequences for regional security, particularly in Central Asia, which plays a vital role in global counterterrorism efforts and the promotion of stability. Additionally, Kazakhstan's strategic location and vast energy resources make it a key player in the international energy market, further emphasizing the need to assess how the evolving leadership influences economic cooperation between the two nations. As the world grapples with

these complex issues, understanding the perspectives and policies of Kazakhstan's new leadership and how they align with U.S. interests becomes imperative for fostering effective international cooperation and addressing common challenges.

### **Energy Relationship**

The relationship between the United States and Kazakhstan, particularly in the context of energy, has been characterized by strategic cooperation and mutual benefit. Kazakhstan is a significant player in the global energy market, possessing substantial oil and natural gas reserves. The United States has been actively involved in fostering energy partnerships with Kazakhstan, aiming to diversify its energy sources and enhance global energy security. The Caspian region, where Kazakhstan is a key player, has attracted U.S. interest due to its vast energy resources. The U.S. has supported Kazakhstan's efforts to develop its energy sector and enhance its role as an energy exporter. American companies have invested in Kazakhstan's energy projects, contributing to the modernization and expansion of the country's energy infrastructure. Diplomatic ties have been strengthened through energy cooperation agreements. These agreements encompass areas such as technology transfer, investment protection, and joint exploration ventures. As both countries navigate the evolving global energy landscape, their collaborative efforts contribute to stability in the region and underscore the strategic importance of the U.S.-Kazakhstan energy relationship. The mutual benefits derived from this partnership serve as a foundation for broader diplomatic and economic cooperation between the two nations.

### **Security Relationship**

The security relationship between the United States and Kazakhstan is characterized by shared interests in regional stability, counterterrorism efforts, and non-proliferation initiatives. Both nations recognize the importance of collaborating on security matters to address common threats and challenges. Kazakhstan, as a Central Asian nation, plays a crucial role in contributing to regional security. The U.S. has engaged in cooperative efforts with Kazakhstan to enhance border security, combat transnational crime, and address the spread of extremism. Kazakhstan's commitment to non-proliferation, particularly with regards to nuclear weapons, aligns with broader global security objectives, and the U.S. has supported Kazakhstan in securing and eliminating weapons of mass destruction materials.

The two countries engage in joint military exercises and exchange military expertise, fostering interoperability and enhancing the capacity of Kazakhstani forces. This collaboration not only contributes to the security of Kazakhstan but also strengthens regional stability. Diplomatically, the U.S. and Kazakhstan are partners in international forums, such as the United Nations, where they coordinate efforts on global security issues. The security relationship, therefore, reflects a shared commitment to addressing contemporary security challenges, promoting regional stability, and upholding international peace and security.

### **Kazakhstan Relations with Russia and China**

Kazakhstan maintains a strategic balancing act in its relations with Russia and China, two significant neighbors with whom it shares deep historical and geopolitical ties. With Russia, Kazakhstan has a long-standing partnership stemming from their shared Soviet past. Both countries are members of the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU), a regional economic bloc, which fosters economic integration. Additionally, they collaborate closely on security matters within the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). Kazakhstan also forges robust ties with China, its eastern neighbor and an emerging global power. Economic cooperation between Kazakhstan and China has flourished through initiatives like the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Energy projects, trade agreements, and infrastructure development have strengthened their economic partnership. Kazakhstan's significant role in the BRI provides it with opportunities for economic growth and diversification. Despite these partnerships, Kazakhstan is careful to maintain its sovereignty and avoid over-dependence on any single ally. Astana, the capital of Kazakhstan, pursues a multi-vector foreign policy, emphasizing cooperation with both Moscow and Beijing while safeguarding its national interests. This nuanced approach allows Kazakhstan to leverage the benefits of its relationships with Russia and China while maintaining its independence in regional and global affairs.

## Literature Review

**Sunita, M. (2019).**After the 9/11 attack, Kazakhstan-US relations experienced a notable shift. Kazakhstan swiftly condemned the terrorist actions and pledged support to the United States in its fight against terrorism. This solidarity fostered closer cooperation between the two nations, particularly in counterterrorism efforts and security cooperation. Kazakhstan granted overflight rights and logistical support to US forces engaged in operations in neighboring Afghanistan, demonstrating its commitment to the global fight against terrorism. Additionally, the US recognized Kazakhstan as a strategic partner in Central Asia, deepening diplomatic, economic, and military ties. The relationship also expanded into energy cooperation, with the US investing in Kazakhstan's burgeoning oil and gas industry. Overall, the post-9/11 period saw Kazakhstan and the US forging a stronger partnership based on mutual security interests and shared objectives in combating terrorism and promoting regional stability.

**Cohen, A., et al (2021).**Over the past three decades, the bilateral relationship between the United States and Kazakhstan has evolved into a robust partnership characterized by mutual respect and cooperation. Since Kazakhstan gained independence in 1991, the US has been a key supporter of its sovereignty and development aspirations. This relationship has been built on shared values such as democracy, human rights, and economic prosperity. The US has provided significant assistance to Kazakhstan in various areas, including security, education, and economic development. Kazakhstan, in turn, has emerged as a strategic partner for the US in Central Asia, contributing to regional stability and security. Energy cooperation has also been a cornerstone of the relationship, with Kazakhstan's vast oil and gas reserves presenting lucrative opportunities for American investment. As both countries celebrate 30 years of diplomatic ties, the special relationship between the US and Kazakhstan continues to thrive, poised for further collaboration in addressing global challenges and advancing shared interests.

**Sahib, H. M. (2014).**From 1991 to 2013, US-Kazakhstan relations witnessed significant growth and diversification across various fronts. Initially characterized by American support for Kazakhstan's independence, the relationship evolved into a multifaceted partnership spanning political, economic, and security domains. The US played a pivotal role in facilitating Kazakhstan's integration into the global community, supporting its accession to international

organizations and promoting democratic reforms. Economic ties flourished, with the US becoming a major investor in Kazakhstan's oil and gas sector, while also assisting in diversifying its economy. Security cooperation deepened, particularly in counterterrorism efforts and non-proliferation initiatives, reflecting shared interests in regional stability. However, challenges persisted, including concerns over human rights and democratic governance. Overall, the period from 1991 to 2013 marked a transformative phase in US-Kazakhstan relations, characterized by growing collaboration and strategic alignment, albeit amidst occasional tensions and differences in priorities.

**Javaid, F., et al (2021).** During the period of 2001 to 2012, American relations with Kazakhstan experienced a significant expansion and deepening of ties across various sectors. Following the 9/11 attacks, Kazakhstan emerged as a crucial partner in the United States' efforts to combat global terrorism, offering support in logistical operations and providing access to its territory for military transit. This period also witnessed substantial economic cooperation, particularly in the energy sector, with American companies investing heavily in Kazakhstan's oil and gas industry. Diplomatic exchanges intensified, reflecting mutual interests in regional stability and security. However, concerns over human rights and democratic governance occasionally strained the relationship, leading to diplomatic tensions and criticisms from human rights organizations. Nevertheless, overall, the period from 2001 to 2012 underscored the growing strategic importance of Kazakhstan to the United States, marking a phase of enhanced collaboration and engagement between the two nations.

**Kakenova, Z. (2014).** Military-political cooperation between the US and Central Asian states has been characterized by strategic interests in regional security, counterterrorism efforts, and stability. Since the early 2000s, the United States has engaged in various forms of cooperation with countries such as Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan. This cooperation has included joint military exercises, training programs, and logistical support for operations in neighboring Afghanistan. Central Asian states have provided crucial logistical and transit support to US and NATO forces, facilitating the transport of personnel and supplies to Afghanistan. Additionally, the US has provided military assistance and equipment to bolster the counterterrorism capabilities of these countries and enhance their border security. However, this cooperation has not been without challenges, including concerns over human rights abuses and

democratic governance in some Central Asian states. Overall, military-political cooperation between the US and Central Asian states has been shaped by shared security interests and pragmatic considerations amid geopolitical dynamics in the region.

### **Terrorism and Unrest in Kazakhstan**

Kazakhstan initially downplayed the presence of terrorists within its borders, but this stance shifted in late 2003 with the establishment of an Anti-Terrorist Center under the National Security Committee. In late 2004, the center reported the apprehension of over a dozen members of the Islamic Jihad Group/Union of Uzbekistan, an alleged offshoot of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan. The group was claimed to have ties to Al Qaeda and had cells in Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Russia, with alleged involvement in attacks in Uzbekistan. Subsequent incidents include the detention of 15-30 members of the banned Hizbut-Tahrir group in mid-2006, the arrest of 16 alleged terrorists in April 2007 for planning attacks against security and police forces, and the arrest of five members of an alleged Salafi Jihadi Jamaat in February 2008. In September 2009, six individuals were sentenced to 12-17 years for planning attacks against foreign oil companies and non-Muslims. The Kazakh National Security Committee reported preventing four terrorist attacks in 2008 and three in 2009.

In 2011, Kazakhstan experienced a series of alleged terrorist attacks, marked by suicide bombings and bombings targeting security offices. The government, however, was hesitant to disclose many details, and trials of accused terrorists were typically closed to external observers. Notable incidents included a suicide bombing at a security office in Aktoke on May 17, 2011, and a car bombing at another security office in Astana on May 24. On June 30, individuals described as terrorists killed three police officers in Shubarshi village, Aktobe Region.

In response to these attacks, President Nazarbayev initiated changes to the law on religion, which were approved in late September. On October 31, Atyrau witnessed two explosions—one at the regional administration building and another a suicide bombing in a residential area. A week later in Almaty, two police officers were killed by alleged terrorists. On November 12, in Taraz, an individual attacked a security office after killing several police officers. The same day, a thwarted explosion and an attack on a roadblock in Taraz resulted in additional police casualties. The group Jund al-Khilafah claimed responsibility for the Atyrau bombings and potentially other

incidents. The Kazakhstan Office of the Prosecutor-General asserted that Jund al-Khilafah, formed in mid-2011, was led by Kazakh citizens and allied with the Taliban. In November 2011, Kazakhstan officially banned Jund al-Khilafah as a terrorist organization.

### **Kazakhstan's Presidency of the OSCE**

The OSCE's 15th Ministerial Meeting in Madrid in late November 2007 designated Kazakhstan as the host for the OSCE chairmanship in 2010, marking the first time a post-Soviet, Eurasian, Muslim-majority nation would lead an OSCE summit. Kazakhstan's then-Foreign Minister, Marat Tazhin, assured at the Ministerial Meeting that the country would implement human rights reforms before assuming the chairmanship. Tazhin also pledged that during Kazakhstan's chairmanship, NGOs would have the opportunity to participate in OSCE events, and the mandate of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) would be safeguarded.

In June 2008, addressing the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly in Astana, President Nazarbayev outlined the country's preparations for the chairmanship, including the development of a strategy termed "the path to Europe." This blueprint envisioned Kazakhstan's integration into Europe across various domains, including energy, transport, technology transfers, education, culture, and democratization.

Kazakhstan's efforts to fulfill these commitments were perceived as, at best, a mixed progress by most observers. In early February 2009, President Nazarbayev sanctioned amendments to media, elections, and political party laws. Parties that secured less than 7% of the votes in a Majilis election were granted the right to participate in certain legislative matters. The required number of signatures for registering a party for a Majilis election was reduced from 50,000 to 40,000, and there were eased registration requirements for media. However, critics characterized these changes as minor.

A positive development occurred in February 2009 when the constitutional court rejected a proposed law that sought to tighten restrictions on religious freedom, although a more restrictive religion law was passed in 2011. In April 2009, a national action plan on human rights for 2009-2012 was formulated and presented to the OSCE. Nevertheless, in July 2009, changes to the media law were enacted, restricting Internet access and broadly prohibiting media reporting that

"interferes with election campaigns," occurs during restricted campaign news periods, attempts to influence election outcomes, or influences participation in strikes. ODIHR had advised against implementing these changes, urging the legislature not to proceed with them.

### **Research Problem**

The research problem at the core of this study lies in understanding the dynamics and implications of U.S.-Kazakhstan relations in the aftermath of NursultanNazarbayev's presidency. With his departure, a new leadership under President [insert current president's name] has taken the helm, prompting questions about the continuity or transformation of diplomatic ties between the two nations. The key issue revolves around the impact of this leadership transition on various facets of the relationship, such as political cooperation, economic partnerships, and shared efforts in addressing global challenges.the research seeks to address how the departure of NursultanNazarbayev has influenced the strategic priorities and foreign policy objectives of Kazakhstan, and in turn, how these changes shape the United States' approach to engagement with Kazakhstan. Exploring the nuances of this transition period is essential for policymakers, scholars, and practitioners to comprehend the emerging contours of U.S.-Kazakhstan relations, discern potential areas of collaboration, and navigate challenges that may arise in this evolving geopolitical landscape.

### **Conclusion**

The post-NursultanNazarbayev era has ushered in a period of recalibration and adaptation in U.S.-Kazakhstan relations. NursultanNazarbayev's legacy as a statesman who skillfully navigated Kazakhstan through its early years of independence set the foundation for a robust partnership with the United States. As Kazakhstan undergoes a leadership transition under President [insert current president's name], it is evident that the bilateral relationship is at a juncture where continuity and evolution intersect.The study of U.S.-Kazakhstan relations post-Nazarbayev underscores the importance of recognizing the geopolitical significance of Central Asia and Kazakhstan's role in regional stability. The continuation of diplomatic engagement, particularly in areas such as energy, security, and economic diversification, is vital for both nations. Furthermore, the evolving global landscape necessitates a forward-looking approach that considers emerging challenges and opportunities for collaboration.The analysis presented in this

study indicates that the bilateral relationship holds the potential for growth and adaptation to meet the demands of the 21st century. As the United States and Kazakhstan navigate this new chapter, there is an opportunity to deepen cooperation on shared global challenges, reinforcing the strategic importance of their partnership for mutual benefit and contributing to the broader tapestry of international relations.

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