

THE CONCEPT OF EURASISM AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF MAIN BRANCHES OF STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP IN CONTEMPORARY HISTORY OF THE REPUBLIC OF KAZAKHSTAN

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Abstract: The article analyses the essence of the concept of Eurasism and its meaning in the development of main branches of strategic partnership in contemporary history of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Independent vision, perception and values of Eurasism presented and developed by the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev are effectively used in practice on continuing and consecutive basis and embodied in the country's foreign policy. For Kazakhstan, Eurasia is a unique region where ethnic, cultural and religious groups have peacefully lived and co-existed for ages showing mutual trust, confidence and understanding. The idea of space and geography is an important factor in planning and defining foreign policy goals of any state, and it is even more significant for Kazakhstan, a big country with no access to the sea. Geographically, Kazakhstan is an Asian country, only 10% of its territory is situated in Europe, but geopolitically, geoeconomically and geohistorically it considers itself a Eurasian country.

The goal of this article is to study and analyse foreign policy consequences of Eurasism policy, problems and achievements of Kazakhstan foreign policy within the task of multi-vector strategic partnership strengthening.

Keywords: The concept of Eurasism, geopolitics, strategic partnership, multi-vector nature.

INTRODUCTION

Strategic partnership as a term of interstate relations presupposes a number of conditions. First of all, there must be strategic goals crucially significant for partner nations, which cannot be achieved within simple collaboration, but only through bringing bilateral relations to a higher, quality level of partnership. There must be really important indicators of mutual collaboration in main areas – economic, energetic, political, military. Unlike allied relations, strategic partnership does not imply a strict system of responsibilities in political, economic, humanitarian or security areas.

Main strategic partners of Kazakhstan are Russia, China, the USA, European Union. There are more than 15 countries in the circle of states which Kazakhstan considers its strategic partners. On the whole, in the opinion of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan N. Nazarbayev, open foreign policy line of Kazakhstan

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contributed to the fact that the republic has only allies and strategic partners in the world. Kazakhstan diplomats stress that the term “strategic partnership” does not stand for nuances of diplomatic terminology, but for special status of collaboration the achievement requires regular meetings of the heads of two states, mutual understanding and support in the international arena, as well as high dynamics of bilateral collaboration in various areas; strategic partnership contributes to the realization of long-term interests of the Republic of Kazakhstan, furthering the integration of the country into the global system of political and economic relations and improvement of the nation’s well-being (Speech of Marat Tazhin, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan, at Carnegie Endowment for International Peace).

METHODOLOGY

The term “Eurasia” originates from classical theories and the concept of “geopolitics” defined and developed by British geographer sir Halford Mackinder in 1904, which he used to define a huge piece of land to the east of Ural. He claimed that the one who controls this vast territory will control all world politics. (Sengupta 2009).

The term “Eurasism” is mostly a politically ideological and philosophic concept with multiple specific features and aspects, which were mentioned again and again at different historical periods by philosophers, historians, as well as independent political organizations and figures pursuing their respective aims. (Brzezinski 1998; Shrielman 2009).

In Russia the concept of Eurasism with all its changes and modifications is still a very powerful, dominating and active discourse in historic and cultural, scientific and also national, political, ideological discussions.

The vision of Eurasism in Kazakhstan and creation of Eurasian Union on the basis of Eurasian solidarity is an official policy (ideology) developed, launched and implemented by Nursultan Nazarbayev, the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan. It is fundamentally different from Russian and other forms from the point of view of basic goals, tasks, methods, lines and mechanisms of implementation.

In the beginning of 1990s the government of Kazakhstan suggested the concept of Eurasism based on the idea that Kazakhstan is situated both in Asia and Europe and acts as a kind of a “bridge between Asia and Europe”. Kazakhstan’s Eurasism was declared its official ideology by top leaders of the country with the stress on consolidation of peace, solidarity and unity between nations on the basis of morality, spirituality, cultural and historical interaction between the people of different ethnic and language, cultural and religious groups. According to A. Nissanbayev and V. Dunayev, all these historical events and circumstances have contributed to the creation of objective and favourable conditions and basis for a strong integration process. (Nissanbayev and Dunayev 2010).

The head of state Nursultan Nazarbayev suggested his vision of Eurasism for the first time in his speech at Moscow State University in spring of 1994, when he mentioned a number of projects, including the formation of Eurasian Union. He also presented his concept of Eurasism claiming that if you look at the map, it is easy to see that there is a subsequent vertical row of Eurasian countries, from Russia in the north to India in the south, which are still not closely connected to the East or the West. He called this continuous row of countries situated along the meridian of the centre of Eurasia a “waiting row”. Despite all the differences between these countries, they present a rather strong group as for potential resources and possibilities which have influence not only on the balance of strength in Asia and Eurasia, but even on geopolitical balance in the whole world (Nazarbayev 1997).

Nursultan Nazarbayev believes that Kazakhstan lies in the “epicentre of the world” with its new capital Astana being “the heart of Eurasia”. A large number of scientists and high-ranking professionals in Kazakhstan support this point of view and promote it. It has also become part of the culture and education programmes. In one of his books (Nazarbayev 2003, 117-144) Nazarbayev says that it is crucial for Kazakhstan to develop its own multinational culture by bridging cultural gaps between various national, ethnic, and religious groups. In his article in a Russian paper *Izvestiya* (25 October, 2011), Nursultan Nazarbayev also presented his vision of Eurasism and pointed out the following principles the Eurasian Union should be based upon. (1) Pragmatism of the economy. (2) Free will of the participants, who should decide for themselves whether they want to stay within their borders, or join the global world and global market. (3) Equality, mutual respect and sovereignty. (4) Creation of national institutions within the member-countries that will not interfere with their sovereignty (Nazarbayev 2011). The president also pointed out that the Eurasian Union will not in any way be an attempt to revive the Soviet Union.

It is not surprising that Kazakhstan developed its own vision of Eurasism, that was integrated within the national language to talk about the domestic and the foreign policy of the country. Kazakhstan is the largest, the richest, and the most stable multinational country in the Central Asia that has always been interested in developing closer partnership with former soviet republics. Kazakhstan is a unique country, as it has both Asian and European origins, and combines the best traits of both cultures.

Regis Gente (Gente 2010) thinks that the idea of Eurasism developed in Kazakhstan due to the concerns about the influence of Russia, and thus, this idea has become the main principle of the geopolitical and foreign policy of the country. Eurasism as a philosophic concept is the basis of the relationships of Kazakhstan with both Western (the USA, the EU, etc.) and Asian countries.

As already mentioned, Kazakhstan positions itself as a bridge between Asia and Europe, and is willing to conduct active policy through its membership in the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Shanghai

Cooperation Organisation (SCO), the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA), the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), etc. By implementing its active Eurasian involvement policy, Kazakhstan will be able to overcome the “curse” of its geographical location and turn it into a benefit by establishing balanced partnership with the world’s major countries (Olcott 2002).

RESULTS

According to T. Kaliyev, the key vectors of the strategic partnership of Kazakhstan are the following: integration vector aimed at former Soviet Union countries; Eastern vector; European vector; and American vector (Kaliyev 2011). Let us consider these four vectors in more detail.

Integration vector aimed at former Soviet Union countries Russia and the CIS countries have always been the major areas of Kazakhstan’s foreign policy, as every aspect of life in the country was greatly influenced by the social and economic structure of the USSR that had been determining the ethnic and demographic structure, the spheres of culture, education, information, and science of the region for quite a long time (Kushkumbayev 2009).

The Republic of Kazakhstan closely collaborates with Russia due to the economic, political, ethnic, linguistic, demographic, religious, and geographic factors. For both Astana and Moscow, it is a strategic partnership based on mutual trust, economic collaboration, and political dialogue, and following the national interests, pursuing the stability, and security of the countries on the local and international levels. Kazakhstan and Russia have a lot in common. They have similar views on the future development, and the key principles of the Development Strategy of Kazakhstan 2030 and the Russian Development Strategy 2020 are practically the same. The direction and dynamics of the current reforms in both countries are also quite similar. Experts say that, although Kazakhstan and Russia may have very different interests, especially in the sphere of economy, any potential problem or misunderstanding can be resolved through a constructive dialogue between the two countries. (Interview of K. Tokayev)

Since the time Kazakhstan acquired its independence, it has been actively collaborating with other countries of Central Asia both in political and economic spheres, although these countries have never been considered as strategically important as Russia. Among the strategic partners of Kazakhstan are Uzbekistan, Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan. It is of greatest priority for the Republic of Kazakhstan to establish and develop partnership with the neighbouring countries.

One of the reasons for such policy is security: many Kazakhstan politicians point out that being an independent country, Kazakhstan formed a so called “partnership

belt” all along its borders. Uzbekistan, Kyrgyz Republic, and Turkmenistan are on the one side of this belt, and Russia and China - on the other. Another reason for such a policy may be the energy factor (Kazakhstan Respublikasy turaly shetel BAK-tar materialdarynyn dajdzhesi).

American Vector

The USA are of the highest priority of Kazakhstan’s foreign policy. For both Astana and Washington, it is a strategic partnership based on mutual trust, economic collaboration, and political dialogue, and following the national interests, pursuing the stability, and security of the countries on the local and international levels (Unique interview with Yerlan Idrisov).

Among the key documents determining the development of this partnership, is the Charter on Democratic Partnership between the United States of America and the Republic of Kazakhstan. During his visit to the USA in 1997, Nursultan Nazarbayev signed the Agreement on the exploration of Pre-Caspian oil and gas deposits, the Programme for economic partnership between the United States of America and the Republic of Kazakhstan, and a number of other agreements. Clinton, in his return visit to Kazakhstan, pointed out that Kazakhstan is the strategic partner of the USA in Central Asia (Diplomatija zharshysy, 2006). Kazakhstan and the USA have preserved this partnership ever since.

Among the key spheres of partnership between the two countries are the following: non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, military defense and security, trade and economic, and energy (Ivatova 2006). Both countries abide by the principles of freedom, equal opportunities, peace, partnership, dialogue, and mutual understanding. Kazakhstan actively supports some of the international programmes conducted by the USA, such as the idea of the Eurasian Land Bridge, or the New Silk Road.

Kazakhstan is highly apt in promoting integration processes within the region. Since 2011, Kazakhstan and the USA have been discussing the ways of implementing the New Silk Road project. Security and sustainable development of Central Asia are, therefore, the major spheres of strategic partnership between Kazakhstan and the US.

It is also worth mentioning, that Kazakhstan diplomats refer to this partnership as one of the most stable. The characteristic feature of this partnership is that it focuses more closely on the international security initiatives introduced by the USA, rather than on trade and economic cooperation or partnership in the energy sector, although the USA is still one of the major investors for Kazakhstan. While the EU focuses mostly on the energy factor in its partnership with Kazakhstan, the USA pays more attention to the region’s security.

European Vector

Strategic partnership with the European Union is one of the major objectives of Kazakhstan's foreign policy. For the EU, as well as for Russia and China, one of the key spheres of collaboration is the energy sector. Among the OPECK members, Kazakhstan, after Russia and Norway, is the third largest supplier of energy to the EU. (Movkebaevan 2011).

The sphere of prospective partnership also includes energy efficiency, renewable energy, clean coal technologies and carbon capture and storage, as well as further development of the energy infrastructure. The EU also encourages the economic diversification in Kazakhstan by sharing its own experience and know-hows in economics.

Among the major partnership spheres is also the sphere of education. Developed European countries also serve as an example of progressive market economy and lifestyle, international investment, and stable and mutually profitable trade partnership (Kaliyeva 2010)

Partnership agreement between the EU and the Republic of Kazakhstan was signed in 1999, followed by a number of agreements in energy, transport, and nuclear sectors. In 2005, the EU announced Kazakhstan its strategic partner in the region due to the role that Astana plays in solving the problems of global energy security.

On 29 August 2008, the president of the Republic of Kazakhstan adopted and signed the state development programme for 2009-2011 "Route to Europe". The key objectives stated in the programme are the following: to attract direct international investment; to reach strategic partnership with European countries by closer collaboration in the technologies, energy, transport and machine building sectors; to improve the infrastructure and the regulatory framework of Kazakhstan using the experience of European countries (Cutler 2010).

On 27 June 2011, the Republic of Kazakhstan and The European Union started discussing new and broader partnership agreement that would cover all the spheres of long-term collaboration.

Italy, France, Germany, and Spain - the leading European countries - are considered to be the key partners of Kazakhstan in Europe, with Italy, France, and Germany being Kazakhstan's major investors. Partnership with these countries has already brought significant results, especially in the economy sector. Collaboration with Spain is an example of a different kind of partnership. Kazakhstan diplomats point out the dynamics of cooperation in the sphere of politics, while the economic collaboration is not so active. They believe, however, that Spain is one of the most stable and persistent partners of Kazakhstan. This partnership is characterised by mutual trust and understanding. Thus, Spain actively supported Kazakhstan's candidacy for chairmanship of the OSCE, thanks to which all the member counties voted for Kazakhstan during the Council of Foreign Ministers meeting in Madrid

in 2007. In 2010, Kazakhstan's government considered the dynamics and character of this partnership as a guarantee of complete mutual understanding and support, which allowed Kazakhstan to promote its initiatives within the framework of the OSCE and make significant progress in negotiations with the EU (Bulegenov 2010). Kazakhstan and Spain have also similar views on many aspects of their foreign policies.

Kazakhstan is also very interested in partnership with Hungary, as there are no unsettled issues between the two countries. Besides, Hungary has always been defending Kazakhstan's national interests in Europe. Hungary is one of the leaders in Central and Eastern Europe. It went successfully through the transition period and has become a powerful member of the EU (Ibraev 2008).

It is also worth mentioning Kazakhstan's strategic partnership with Turkey as part of the European vector, because Turkey is the Western country from the point of view of geopolitics. Turkey works in close collaboration with Europe, it is a member of NATO and an associated partner of the EU. Both Turkey and Kazakhstan are determined to develop and protect the democracy and secularization of their societies, and their foreign policies are also focused on developing their partnership with the West (Laumulin 2009).

Strategic partnership agreement between Kazakhstan and Turkey was signed on 22 October 2009, during the official visit of Nursultan Nazarbayev to Turkey. At another meeting in 2010, presidents of both countries listed the following sphere of prospective partnership: energy, energy transportation, agriculture, construction, health care, sports, and tourism. They also pointed out that the partnership between the two countries is based on the similarity of history, culture and values of their nations (Sultanov 2012, 199-200). Turkey is considered to be the leading partner of Kazakhstan in the sphere of economics, and Kazakhstan, in turn, is one of the major trade partners of Turkey in Central Asia. There is also a stable political partnership characterised by mutual understanding and support of international initiatives.

Eastern Vector

If we look at the map, we can see that Kazakhstan borders with Russia in the North-West, and China in the East, which are both dynamically developing countries that play great role in the world politics. It is therefore important for Kazakhstan to support and develop partnership with its neighbours, especially with China, the borderline between the two countries is 1700 km.

In 1995, being a Nuclear Power, China guaranteed security to Kazakhstan. During the visit of Nursultan Nazarbayev to China in 1999, a project of mutual partnership agreement for the XXI century was developed. However, back then China refused to discuss strategic partnership with Kazakhstan (Syroezhkin 2010, 76), and good-neighbourly relations agreement was not signed until December 2002.

In 2005, the two countries finally signed a strategic partnership agreement. China has gradually become Kazakhstan's leading trade partner, while Kazakhstan is China's second largest trade partner among the CIS countries. Kazakhstan has a large number of gas and oil deposits, and China is one of the largest consumers on the world energy market. In the past few years, cooperation between the two countries in the energy sector has been increasing rapidly.

Within the framework of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, Kazakhstan and China encourage economic and trade cooperation and work on various regional and international problems (Gleason 2001). Recently, the Chinese government was concerned by the actual goals and objectives of the Eurasian Customs Union, as it is sometimes described by the European mass media as proactive organisation headed by Russia. Kazakhstan, however, criticized this approach as lacking sufficient foundation and being untrue to the reality (Nazarbayev 2011).

Strategic partnership between Kazakhstan and China is based on the energy sector. Considering the growing need for carbon in China, and Kazakhstan's policy of transport route diversification, both countries are interested in developing this partnership. Thus, for Kazakhstan, China may serve as a large export market of uranium. The trade turnover between Kazakhstan and China is practically the same as between Kazakhstan and Russia. Kazakhstan and China have also been developing their partnership in the financial sector. Among the spheres of collaboration are the following: financing of large projects, export credit insurance and information transfer, as well as involving commercial banks in the development of financial markets in both countries by opening branches and bank subsidiaries.

DISCUSSION

The Eurasian policy of Kazakhstan pursues the following goals: to improve its relationships with Russia and other Eurasian countries; to create a balance between Asia and Europe, serving as bridge between East and West, as a source of peace, stability and neutrality; and to create harmonic multinational society within the country. The Eurasism policy of Kazakhstan does not oppose globalisation, but instead considers it as an alternative way of development and integration, which allows Kazakhstan to get integrated in the world processes.

Having acquired its independence, Kazakhstan has pursued a multivescor foreign policy, aimed at supporting partnership with Russia, China, Japan, the USA, the EU, and other countries that play great role in the Eurasian politics and economy. Kazakhstan has already developed stable partnership with Russia and China within the framework of the SCO, and is now eager to strengthen this partnership by means of the Eurasian Customs Union.

Thorough study of the Eurasism policy conducted by Kazakhstan demonstrates, that it is aimed at economical integration on a regional level, which can be reached

by involving former-soviet countries and leaving aside all the controversies and problematic issues of politics, ideology, or security.

The vital point of strategic partnership in any sphere for Kazakhstan are the following.

- Political collaboration and mutual support in foreign policy (high level of mutual trust, transparency, equality, common policy concerning the key world issues, such as nuclear disarmament, as well as promotion Kazakhstan's national interests in the world structures, and recognising its leading role in Central Asia).
- Economic collaboration (investment and trade).
- Collaboration in the energy sector (energy transportation).
- Security factor.

CONCLUSION

It is clear, that Kazakhstan's authorities pay a lot of attention to strategic partnership with other countries, as it is of great importance. Such partnership, however, does not presuppose that political and economic interest of partner countries should coincide completely. Thus, Kazakhstan will never end a partnership upon the requirement of some third party, however powerful and important it may be. It is therefore, very difficult to determine any of the foreign policy vectors as the most important. They are all valuable to Kazakhstan and lie within the framework of its multivector foreign policy.

It is also interesting, that Kazakhstan diplomats define the relations with the USA and the EU as strategic partnership, while they may use other terms - such as alliance - referring to Kazakhstan's partnership with Russian and China.

Strategic partnership does not always require any kind of formal agreement or other document. It seems, that in most cases it is enough to sign some basic partnership agreements or even discuss the major collaboration spheres in person.

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