

KAZAKHSTAN'S MULTI-VECTOR FOREIGN POLICY AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR THE ENERGY SECTOR

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Abstract

This work reveals Kazakhstan's foreign policy strategies, successes, and failures, which are essential to the country's energy industry. Literature review shows that the multi-vector policy allows the government to receive investments from various countries to develop its industry and energy sector. However, a foreign policy problem can lead to fierce competition between the Great Powers and have consequences for the country's energy diversification.

***Keywords:** Kazakhstan's Multi-Vector Policy, Energy Diversification, Great Powers Competition*

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1. Introduction

After gaining independence, Kazakhstan was still dependent on Russia. Moreover, due to solid integration with the Soviet Union, industrialization stopped. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Kazakhstan's economy collapsed as the entire industry came under Russian control. Therefore, the key industry for development has become the energy sector of Kazakhstan. (Gaur, Tripathi, & Ray, 2021; İpek, 2007).

Nevertheless, transportation of natural resources that depend on Russia is necessary for the country's development. To be independent of any country, Kazakhstan adopts a multi-vector foreign policy. When adopting this policy, the Head of State explains that multi-vector means mutually beneficial relations with tremendous and regional countries (Omelicheva & Du, 2018). There are many definitions of what a multi-vector policy is for Kazakhstan. However, the most crucial concept is that Kazakhstan conducts a balanced policy with all the Great Powers, Russia, China, and the US. This geopolitical course reduces dependence on any superpower (Nurshanbayev, 2020). Instead of depending on only one Great Power, Kazakhstan

pursued its interests in a pragmatic but prudent way by diversifying partners with a soft balancing. Multi-vector foreign policy seems the best strategy for a country in a region vulnerable to the Great Power rivalry. (Nezihoglu, 2020).

Many experts consider Kazakhstan's multi-vector policy as successful. His success is visible in different areas. Vanderhill, Joireman & Tulepbayeva (2020) explored interesting methods of how Kazakhstan builds relationships with all countries and tries not to depend on one. For example, Kazakhstan equally builds good relations with all powers and, at the same time, maintains its legitimacy. With China, Kazakhstan has many large projects, ranging from "One Belt, One Road" to significant investments in the country. Kazakhstan is on good terms with the US and Russia as with China. Despite good relations, Kazakhstan shows its independence from each without supporting their contradictory views for Kazakhstan in the international arena. From a theoretical point of view, this attitude of Kazakhstan towards other countries shows how it can use countries to its advantage. However, usually small countries choose a low-key policy.

The multi-vector policy of Kazakhstan is of great importance for the country's energy diversification. Kazakhstan's foreign policy strategies help balance the Great Powers' influence in the energy sector (Hanks, 2009).

Vanderhill, Joireman & Tulepbayeva (2020) agreed with Hanks' argument and believed that Kazakhstan benefits by inviting everyone to the region and balancing them. Kazakhstan is building pipelines together with China to reduce dependence on Russia.

The success of the multi-vector policy is undeniable. However, a problem with this policy is missing in the related literature. Kazakhstan's multi-vector policy intensifies competition between the Great Powers to acquire energy resources. There are also statements about the New Great Game's appearance. This is a competition for the dominance of Central Asian energy between the great powers and other actors.

Since Central Asia is a transit of energy resources, the great powers are trying to gain control over the region. Each of them has interests that can affect the energy resources of Kazakhstan (Swanstrom, 2005; Dorian, Wigdortz, & Gladney, 1997). This problem has actuality even today. During the Ukrainian crisis, Kazakhstan conducts a neutral policy.

Nevertheless, due to Russia's strained relations with the West, Kazakhstan is still suffering because of the confrontation. And this situation in Kazakhstan has affected the energy sector. Kazakhstan suffers from Russian and US maneuvers due to recent events (Lloyd, 1997; "Kazakhstan," 2022). This provision shows the dependence of Kazakhstan on the relations of the great powers. Since there is minor literature covering the problem of Kazakhstan's multi-vector policy, this study aims to review the success of the multi-vector policy and reveal its problem. In addition, this study identifies its significance for the country's energy diversification. For this purpose, this research uses objectives to identify the definition of a multi-vector foreign policy in Kazakhstan, its strategies, and its effectiveness. In addition, this research determines the significance of a multi-vector policy for the energy sector of Kazakhstan. Moreover, it will identify the effects of a multi-vector policy on the country's energy diversification.

The research question of this work is "What impact has the multi-vector strategy of Kazakhstan had on the country's energy diversification?". This study will answer this question and contribute to the knowledge and development of the foreign policy of Kazakhstan by identifying a multi-vector policy strategy and its implications for energy diversification. The study will show the positive or negative effects of multi-vector policy on the country's energy diversification policy, thereby ensuring the emergence of new views and ideas for the development energy sector and foreign policy.

2. Literature Review

Since its independence, Kazakhstan has still had dependent on Russia. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Kazakhstan's economy collapsed since industries came under the control of Russia. Kazakhstan's economy depended on Russia, as strong integration with the Soviets stopped industrialization. In addition, the geographical position of Kazakhstan in the energy sector relies on the transportation of Russia (Gaur, Tripathi, & Ray, 2021; İpek, 2007). Several factors put Russia in a more advantageous position than the other regional players (Nezihoglu, 2021). The ethnic majority of Russians and dependence on pipelines allowed Russia to be an "older brother" of Kazakhstan.

Nevertheless, relations with Russia are not enough for the development of Kazakhstan. Russia cannot provide all financial and technical assistance (Gaur et al., 2021). Kazakhstan's geopolitical position is that it is hard to border Russia and China without access to the sea. In

addition, Kazakhstan is heavily dependent on energy resources, which account for 70 percent of energy exports and 40 percent of government revenues. Europe imports oil from Kazakhstan. Since transportation depends on Russian pipelines, Kazakhstan tries to get out of Russia's influence. And the expense of economic and political relations with other great powers such as China, the USA, and the EU. It is called the "opportunistic multivariate approach" when great powers are used for economic advantage by pitting them against each other (Omelicheva & Du, 2018). Therefore, to solve such problems and obtain financial benefits, Kazakhstan uses a "multi-vector policy." The country adopted this policy as the basis of foreign policy. A multi-vector policy helps establish relationships with governments and benefits from it (Contessi, 2015; Vanderhill et al., 2020). In its definition, the multi-vector policy of Kazakhstan is primarily stable and balanced relations with countries. This geopolitical course reduces dependence on any superpower (Nurshanbayev, 2020). A multi-vector policy is used to mitigate the impact of geopolitical competition in Central Asia, eliminate dependence specifically on Russia, and overcome the restrictions arising from the lack of access to the sea. The multi-vector policy is the exploitation of great powers.

Kazakhstan uses specific multi-vector strategies. It is preferred for security concerns relating to Russia. Kazakhstan participated in various organizations to keep its sovereignty and autonomy and create more room for maneuvering (Nezihoglu, 2020). Accordingly, it adopted a diversification policy in the energy sector. It should limit the seizure of the energy sector by one power. Russia has pipelines for the leading transportation, so Moscow dictates prices and conditions. After a multi-vector policy, Western companies and China facilitate Russia's tight control.

Furthermore, this strategy is aimed at socio-economic development. Since transportation costs account for 50% of trade, the country needs to improve infrastructure and ensure integration in transportation (Contessi, 2015). Vanderhill et al. (2020) also noted the importance of getting out of Russia's dependence since this policy was to preserve sovereignty and use a balanced policy, having good relations with everyone. Both authors mentioned Nazarbayev's words about what a multi-vector policy is. Nevertheless, this is not only improving relations with all states, as the president mentions, but also a unique strategy that helps Kazakhstan invite everyone to this area so as not to depend on one country and exclude the reasons for attacking Kazakhstan. There are specific examples of how Kazakhstan behaves concerning the great powers. It builds good relations with all powers in the same way and, at

the same time, maintains its legitimacy. With China, Kazakhstan has many economic and political projects, ranging from "One Belt, One Road" to significant investments in the country.

Nevertheless, also Kazakhstan resists him on undesirable issues for its policy. As with China, Kazakhstan, in relations with the United States and Russia, refuses to obey, not supporting their views in the international arena. Kazakhstan is more dismissive of Russia because of its heavy dependence. However, by using good relations with Russia, Kazakhstan could join the Eurasian Economic Union, although Kazakhstan was closed to NATO simultaneously. Despite this, their relationship remains consistently good. The United States is an essential actor for Kazakhstan as well. From a theoretical perspective, such attitudes of Kazakhstan toward other countries show how it can use countries to its advantage, even though usually smaller countries choose restrained policies.

"Using the strategies of inclusion, tactical concessions, and diplomatic persuasion has helped Astana maintain the perception of a strategic and geopolitical balance among the power players in Central Asia" (Omelicheva & Du, 2018, p. 100). The security structure in Central Asia from various threats is vital for Kazakhstan. There are essential successes of Kazakhstan's multi-vector policy, such as participation in resolving many international conflicts. The capital of Kazakhstan has become an important place for negotiations where the parties reached a ceasefire agreement. In addition, in UN sessions, Kazakhstan always considers the importance of the UN relationship with regional organizations for discussion. It tries to get a waiver from using nuclear weapons (Nurshanbayev, 2020). Kazakhstan is not limited to this success but strives to revive the ancient Silk Road and improve bilateral relations with Russia and India. Kazakhstan also seeks to develop a strategy to increase the number of countries from the G-20 to the G-Global (Gaur et al., 2021).

The energy sector of Kazakhstan is the most important in the country, and it is necessary for further development. The importance of the energy sector can be seen in economic data. Oil is more than half of all exports and a large part of GDP. Kazakhstan receives investments from all countries (Kaiser & Pulsipher, 2007).

Russia is trying to take over the energy sector in Kazakhstan because of Russia's fear of growing foreign investment. There is already a large company in Russia that has such an opportunity. However, the West is helping Kazakhstan get out of Russian control by investing in the energy sector. In addition, Kazakhstan and China have built a new pipeline that Russia

does not control. Kazakhstan is trying to supply gas through a competitive Russian company (Marten, 2007). Kazakhstan's multi-vector strategy balances Russia, the US, and China in the energy sector. For example, Kazakhstan is building a pipeline project with the signed oil contract with the American company Chevron. However, in negotiations with the President of Russia, Kazakhstan pointed out this project's complexity and received favorable tariffs in partnership with Russia (Hanks, 2009). However, sometimes a multi-vector policy can negatively affect the energy sector.

Russia is trying to control the Caspian Sea, and Kazakhstan wants to divide the Caspian region using territorial rights. Russia prevented transportation through its pipeline, revealing the reason for the presence of mercaptan in Kazakhstan's oil. Even when Kazakhstan got rid of mercaptan in its oil, Russia did not allow transportation for political reasons. Kazakhstan had to attract Russian Lukoil to the Karachaganak field to avoid such a situation. Oil transportation is a severe problem for Kazakhstan (İpek, 2007). Russia restricts access to pipelines to become a monopoly and receive rents. Kazakhstan pays a significantly higher price for transportation than Russian companies (Raballand & Esen, 2006).

To avoid this dependence, Kazakhstan is taking measures in foreign policy. Many scholars have noticed how Kazakhstan uses unique methods in foreign policy to develop the energy sector. Omelicheva and Du (2018) explored a technique that helped Kazakhstan benefit from the great powers by inviting them to the region. This method is called inclusion and invites various countries to tenders held in the energy sector. Other scientists have noticed a similar strategy in the energy sector. In Kazakhstan, the multi-vector policy has had success in balancing power. When Kazakhstan was dependent on Russian pipelines, Kazakhstan needed to cooperate with China. Kazakhstan has built a pipeline that connects China to Asia and reduces Russian influence to reduce dependence. Channels have also opened to transport energy from Uzbekistan through Kazakhstan. Kazakhstan has successfully used its policy to deliver fuel to Europe and even negotiated better tariffs with Russia (Vanderhill et al., 2020). In addition, Kazakhstan took advantage of the lack of attention of Russia for some time and attracted new countries to the region, starting with Washington. It helped him attract more investment (Omelicheva & Du, 2018). Kazakhstan proposed the construction of the Yuxinou railway, which Kazakhstan successfully built with the help of the Asian Development Bank, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, and China. The route is shorter by

1000 kilometers from the Trans-Siberian Railway of Russia. Kazakhstan is also introducing railway connections with China (Contessi, 2015).

Kazakhstan's multi-vector policy allows the Great Powers to enter the region. Moreover, the presence of oil increases competition for influence in Kazakhstan. The multi-vector approach of Kazakhstan in the energy sector may lead to a conflict of interests between the Great Powers in Kazakhstan since each state pursues its interests purely and wants to expand its sphere of influence. Many scholars referred to the "Great Game" by noticing this danger. Karasac (2002) assumed a lousy outcome of events in finding the great powers in Central Asia. Great authorities are pursuing their interests in the region, and possessing oil increases the danger of conflicts of interest. Such an outcome of events could lead to a new "Great Game" in the 19th century. In addition, this is no longer a struggle between two countries but a struggle between large countries and companies. The large oil reserves of these countries and the growing need for energy resources will intensify this struggle. Edwards (2003) distinguished this danger by comparing it with the last great game held between Russia and Great Britain. In those days, it was a political struggle that began with the expansion of Russia. Their goal was to seize the lands of Central Asia.

Moreover, the current struggle is more about getting as many energy resources as possible from the countries of Central Asia. The author's research comparing aspects of the great game and the new great game shows the universality of the new one. It covers a large geographical area and several aspects, such as cultural, economic, social, and political spheres.

Kazakhstan's rich energy resources increase the appetite of the energy-hungry countries. Furthermore, Kazakhstan's multi-vector foreign policy invites the most vital powers to its region, increasing the danger. From the above literature review, we saw the competition for gaining control of the energy sector between great powers such as Russia and the USA. İpek (2007) find out about this political and economic confrontation between Russia and US. Based on the preceding, there is a hypothesis that will be further investigated.

Hypothesis: The multi-vector policy of Kazakhstan intensifies competition for influence and dominance over energy resources and export routes among the great powers.

Every Great Power is trying to gain complete control over Kazakhstan's energy resources and expand its sphere of influence. So this study addresses this issue in subsequent chapters.

3. Methodology and Data collection

This study has an interpretivism philosophy, so the study is considered from a subjective point of view and considers various ideas. It is also important to note that the type of study is inductive. Because the study is exploratory and does not test a specific theory, this research uses a qualitative research method since it is best suited for analyzing the successes and problems of multi-vector policy and its importance for the country's energy diversification.

Nevertheless, a qualitative research method is used to uncover the essential issue of multi-vector policy, bringing competition for dominance between the great powers and studying the impact of multi-vector policy on the country's energy diversification. This method will help to consider the validity of the above hypothesis: "Kazakhstan's multi-vector policy exacerbates competition for influence and dominance over energy resources and export routes between the great powers." Many researchers of multi-vector politics use a qualitative research method because it helps to consider the problem in depth by paying attention to words. Ipek Pinar wrote one such research paper in 2007 about the use of this policy by Kazakhstan and its energy sector.

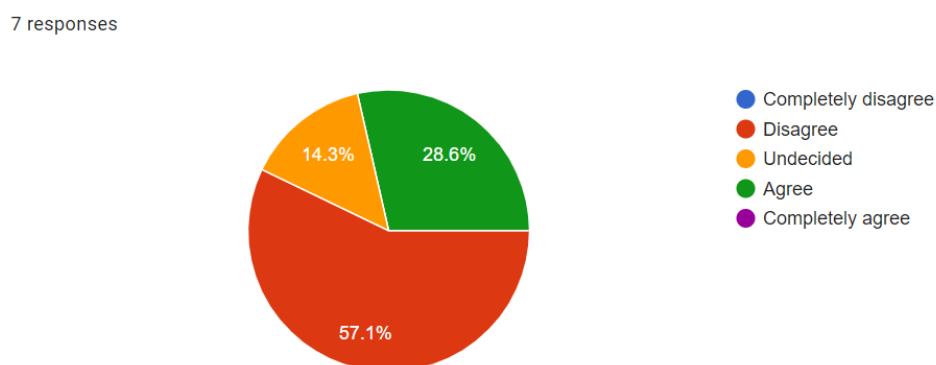
This study analyzes Kazakhstan's relations with great powers to answer the research question. In addition, to understand the development of these relations, this article examines the latest news, statements, and plans of ministers and other officials. This study collects data from both primary data and secondary studies. The primary data were collected from interviews conducted. A purposeful sampling method is used to interview since this article requires a group of people who have information about Kazakhstan's foreign policy and energy industry. This analysis uses interviews, which helps to consider the arguments for a specific situation. Interviews were conducted with seven scientists of higher educational institutions of Almaty and Nur-Sultan. 6 interviews were conducted by e-mail and one via WhatsApp. Interviews were conducted from April 21 to 29, 2022. The structured interview method was used as it was necessary to get answers to specific questions on Kazakhstan's multi-vector policy.

4. Analysis and Findings

Edwards (2003) explored the emergence of a new great game by comparing it to the last great game. In the current struggle, the participants are trying to get as many energy resources as possible from the countries of Central Asia. In addition, the danger is that now there are more of these participants than in the previous one. Therefore, the US, Russia, and China have announced their plans to dominate since the 2000s, and no one will give in.

The multi-vector policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan will lead to a "New Great Game," that is, to the struggle for dominance in the energy sector between the great powers. 28.6% of scholars agreed with this statement during the interview and commented on why they agreed.

Figure 1.1. The Rise of the New Great Game from Kazakhstan's Multi-vector Policy



Source: Figure created by the author based on data from the interview.

The second and fourth interviewees agreed with this statement. Because they believe that Kazakhstan's preference for a multi-vector policy rather than close relations with Russia has opened the way for other actors to enter Kazakhstan's energy sector, they exercise their maneuvers and interests freely. However, it was also the only right decision for Kazakhstan, which was under pressure due to the economy's collapse after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The fourth interviewee argues that no states except Russia could cope with the mechanization that appeared due to the strong interdependence of countries, and the preference for a multi-vector policy rather than a closed economy was salvation for Kazakhstan. Kazakhstan tried to get investments from everyone by inviting them to the region.

Moreover, the second interviewer believes this is not the only reason for the emergence of a new big game since the collapse of the Soviet Union. The emergence of many small countries with large reserves of energy resources has already prompted a repetition of this game. The interviewers' opinions diverge only from this since the fourth interviewer believes that Kazakhstan does not have such a large energy reserve that can lead to confrontation with other countries. Therefore, the main factor stimulating geopolitical competition in the region is not hydrocarbons but a tool that states use to spread their influence in the country.

Nevertheless, both interviewers agree that the growing interest in Kazakhstan from various countries after the collapse of the Soviet Union and Kazakhstan's invitation to the region set the suitable ground and created incentives for Kazakhstan to adopt a multi-vector foreign policy as a rational foreign policy position. Furthermore, this led to increased competition.

Qamar and Sumera (2014) noted the US plans in Central Asia. The first goal of the US is to stop the Russian and Chinese influence in the region. In addition, the US improve this influence by investing in the energy sector and cooperating against international terrorism.

The US-China is also in this competition. China's dominance in the region is significant because of the need for energy resources. Chinese oil imports are increasing yearly, and their imports already exceed 30 percent of the oil consumed. China is trying to transport as much energy as possible from Central Asia, and a large share of the transportation comes from Kazakhstan (Rumer, 2002; Dorian et al., 1997).

China is significantly dependent on energy resources as its most important region in Xinjiang, which is already close to depletion. Therefore, China is trying to dominate Central Asia and buy oil fields. China bought an oil field in Kazakhstan for 5 billion. It also plans to build pipelines in Kazakhstan for 9 billion dollars. In 1997, they signed agreements to build a 3,000 km pipeline from the Caspian region to Xinjiang. China also buys a stake in deposits in Kazakhstan from British Gas companies. It can be seen in how China is buying oil fields and building pipelines to dominate Kazakhstan's energy sector completely. Now the most influential in the region are China and the United States. They are not concerned about the presence of Russia in the region because they believe that Russia has its own economic and political problems (Swanstrom, 2005; Dorian et al., 1997).

Kazakhstan is dependent on oil products from Russia, even though Kazakhstan was the second-largest producer of crude oil in the Soviet Union. The infrastructure of Kazakhstan does not allow oil processing. Therefore, Kazakhstan cooperates with Russian oil companies to exchange oil for raw materials. Nevertheless, the most substantial dependence of Kazakhstan on Russia is the dependence on pipelines. It allows Russia to influence the energy sector of Kazakhstan strongly. This situation happened in 1992 when Russia used its advantage to enter a deal in Karachaganak. In addition, Russia is trying to gain control over large projects, challenging the rights in the Caspian Sea. These disputes have led to the suspension of many international projects. Russia proves its intention to influence the energy sector by countering other countries' profits, shutting down exports through pipelines, and changing contracts (Lloyd & Sarah, 1997; Dorian et al., 1997).

Based on the previous, the multi-vector policy allowed to enter the region new actors, who eventually tried to take over the energy resources of Kazakhstan. This competition between the great powers for obtaining energy resources is most evident in the territory of Kazakhstan. Kazakhstan remains in greater danger since the largest oil fields are located in Kazakhstan. Moreover, Kazakhstan's close relations with Russia, China, and the US make it a target for rivalry (Neil & Bekenova, 2017). Kazakhstan's close relations with other countries and this growing competition for dominance make it vulnerable; most of all, it affects its energy diversification.

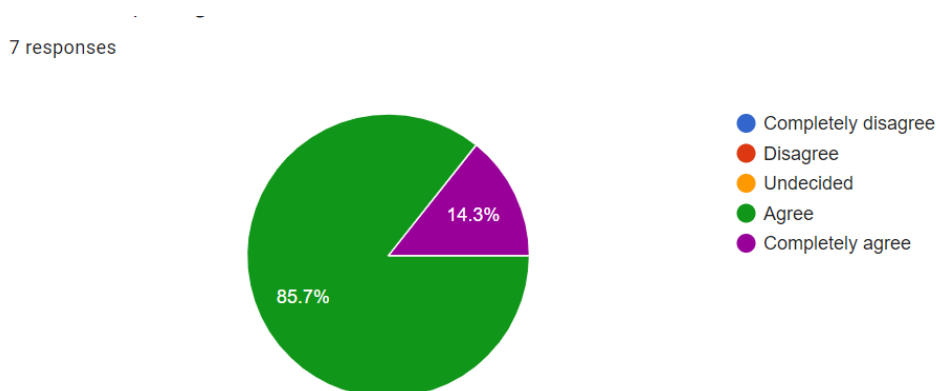
The sixth interviewer argues that Kazakhstan is vulnerable to relations between Russia and the West. Since Kazakhstan is in allied relations with Russia and is a member of the Eurasian Economic Union together with Russia, any confrontation or competition for dominance between them will also affect Kazakhstan. In addition, Kazakhstan suffers from dependence on transportation because it is an energy-producing country, not a manufacturing one, making it vulnerable. He also claims that the current situation is also unfavorable for Kazakhstan. The banking sector and the economic diversification of the country are deteriorating. Only weak implementation of structural reforms can still give a chance for productivity gains and advantages over other countries. Nevertheless, while the country remains dependent on relations with other countries, and even more so, the confrontation between the great powers affects the energy diversification policy in Kazakhstan.

However, there are counterarguments from scientists who claim that a multi-vector policy and the resulting competition can positively influence energy diversification. The fourth interviewer argues that the current confrontation between the US and Russia will revive this Cold War-style expansionism. Investments in Kazakhstan's energy sector and its potential benefits in diversifying their hydrocarbon economy in finding new suppliers will increase interest in Kazakhstan. Moreover, the multi-vector nature will be a decisive element, and the more parties involved in the economy, the better Kazakhstan's position will be. The more options available to Kazakhstan, the less incentive for other parties to attack Kazakhstan. Also, the second interviewer argues that the growing confrontation positively affects the country. He argued that the dominance and monopoly of one power in the energy sector of Kazakhstan would make it dependent only on this power. It will minimize benefits and maximize costs, leaving no room for autonomy and maneuvering for the Kazakh side. Great power rivalry and confrontation will have a softening effect on a country's dependency and its energy sector. As the great powers balance each other, providing more autonomy and the ability to choose between alternatives and balancing the diverse interests of different players for maximum benefit. The presence of alternatives and competition between them work to the benefit of Kazakhstan, providing it with a more substantial hand and negotiating positions on the terms of cooperation. While the absence of alternatives leads to monopolization and dominance by one power, active participation and confrontation between multiple players provide Kazakhstan with alternative exits and channels for unconditional maneuvering and better maximizing its interests.

The first and fifth interviewers believe that the confrontation of the great powers can shift the energy diversification of Kazakhstan in the other direction. The first interviewer argues that these confrontations, depending on their scale and intensity, sides, and duration, can influence Kazakhstan's energy diversification policy differently. In general, any prolonged confrontation involving Russia with China will push Kazakhstan to develop its transport routes through the South, that is, through Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran, and through the West, it is Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Turkey. In addition, these confrontations will force Kazakhstan to rely more on its Western partners. Moreover, the fifth also believes that Kazakhstan will strive to advance its interests and take a more advantageous position for itself. For example, to increase pressure on Russia by searching for alternative export routes.

In interviews, scholars agreed with the statement: "The multi-vector policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan has been successful since its announcement in 1992 as a principle of foreign policy since it has allowed the country to benefit from the participation of great powers in the energy sector."

Figure 1.2. The success of Kazakhstan's Multi-vector Policy



Source: Figure created by the author based on data from interview

Despite what many scholars consider the multi-vector policy successful, it has drawbacks. Kazakhstan pursues a multi-vector policy and balances the influence of the Great Powers in the region, but this policy may not work correctly. It can be seen in the energy sector's observations of the 2022 events. In 1992, negotiations began on creating a pipeline 1,500 km from the Tengiz field. Kazakhstan, Russia, and Oman Oil Company have established the Caspian Pipeline Consortium. Although, in the beginning, it was a problematic construction, as it required significant investments, 80 percent of Kazakhstan's oil exports were transported through the Caspian Pipeline Consortium (Lloyd, 1997). Kazakhstan is suffering from confrontation and sanctions between the West and Russia. The West imposed sanctions against oil imports from Russia. However, the US Treasury Department reported that the Caspian Pipeline Consortium had been removed from this list of import bans. Furthermore, the Caspian Pipeline Consortium makes it possible to transport other energy resources, except for Russian ones ("Kazakhstan," 2022).

Based on the preceding and recent events, it is clear that geopolitical confrontations are strongly affecting Kazakhstan. Moreover, the Ukrainian Crisis in 2022 may even affect Kazakhstan's relations with other Great Powers.

The third interviewer believes that the long-term status quo will depend on how Kazakhstan reacts to the Ukrainian crisis. If it, as usual, behaves favorably to all the great powers, then the status quo will be preserved. If there is something provocative on the part of Kazakhstan to any of the great powers, then this will have negative consequences for Kazakhstan. The fourth interviewer also believes that the other effect of this situation and the future relations of Kazakhstan with the great powers are unknown. However, if Western powers continue to include Kazakhstan in sanctions, this could cause tension. Russia is already putting pressure on Kazakhstan, which Kazakhstan is largely resisting. The most considerable uncertainty in the future is related to relations with Russia. Balancing disparate interests means that Kazakhstan does not take a firm position in either direction and may appear passive. The fifth interviewer agrees that Kazakhstan's policy is passive. It is necessary to get out of this situation by choosing one position because the war in Ukraine will increase the confrontation between the powers. He argues that it will be difficult for Kazakhstan to maintain a pragmatic balance of powers. At some point, Kazakhstan will have to take a more precise position. For example, during World War II, the Republic of Turkey remained neutral until the end of the war and de facto declared war on Germany under pressure from the allied powers. However, the sixth interviewer argues that Kazakhstan is pursuing a reasonable and balanced policy and, simultaneously, impartial concerning all countries. Kazakhstan does not adhere to either side and does not yet face the dilemma of an aggressive choice. That is why Kazakhstan's relations with the great powers will be balanced and will not worsen. It can take India as an example, which takes a neutral position, does not adjoin any parties to the conflict, and remained neutral even during the Cold War.

Most scholars have argued that Kazakhstan's relations with Russia will worsen, and Kazakhstan's foreign policy will shift towards the West. The second interviewer states that Kazakhstan has pursued a prudent foreign policy and avoided alarming Russia. Territorial proximity, extended borders, and military operational capacity provided Russia, the former overlord of the region, with several advantages in its rivalry over the region with the other great powers. The war in Ukraine ensured the maintenance of the regional geopolitical status quo. It is expected to increase prudence in Kazakh foreign policy further though it is not likely to end the multi-vector policy. The Western powers failed to respond immediately and effectively to the Russian invasion of Georgia (2008) and its annexation of Crimea (2014). They declared

their policy of refraining from direct military confrontation with Russia despite a full-fledged war in Ukraine. Central Asian and Kazakh authorities are expected to be more cautious in their policies not to alarm Russia by keeping a sensitive balance. A change of policy and the level of prudence is defined by shifts the power position of Russia in the international hierarchy of power. However, there are also arguments from the first interviewer who believes that Kazakhstan will be able to change its policy in the other direction without being afraid to disturb Russia since Kazakhstan will inevitably distance itself from Russia. Kazakhstan has some notable similarities with Ukraine. It is a part of the Budapest Memorandum breached and violated by Russia, being a target for Russian imperial politicians, struggling to develop and maintain the independent foreign policy and cultural policy, nation-building. In addition, Kazakhstan will be more cautious toward China because of its hidden imperial agenda and "big power" ambitions, which may be more dangerous if a vacuum appears in the post-Soviet Eurasia due to Russian weakening. The ties with the EU and the USA will increase. In addition, the relations with other Central Asian countries, significantly with Uzbekistan, will strengthen. The relations with Turkey are expected to improve. The fourth interviewer also agrees with the argument that Kazakhstan is distancing itself from Russia because it is vulnerable to Russia. In addition, the interviewee argues that this is a time for Kazakh authorities to revive the true nature of the multi-vector policy in Kazakhstan, which was inclining heavily toward Russia in the recent decades, primarily due to political reasons. That it will be tough for Kazakhstan to diminish the presence of Russia in its economy; therefore, the primary means of avoiding the fate of Ukraine is to open up and attract as many investors as possible. These investors may not only be from the West but also from India and China, which are crucial partners for Russia, so the economy can get additional impetus for the development. At the same time, attacking the state will be very costly. Therefore, Kazakhstan has no choice but to promote good relations with many players, including the Great Powers.

Nevertheless, the director of the Caspian Pipeline Consortium, Nikolai Gorban, reported another problem. This problem also affected the energy diversification of the country. An accident occurred at the Caspian Pipeline Consortium due to a storm magnitude of 11. The accident partially suspended the transportation of energy resources. All the media in Kazakhstan, Russia, and the West are already writing about this. "CHP na KTK" (2022) reports the statements of Kazakhstan's officials. They commented on the situation in the Caspian Pipeline Consortium. They claim that if the problem had been solved in the Caspian Pipeline

Consortium earlier, there would have been no significant losses, but still, the losses are 150 billion tenges.

Alimova (2022) claims that the accident at the Caspian Pipeline Consortium is not an accident. Since none of the Western partners was allowed to inspect the damaged berths, the author noted that the Western media claim that this accident in the Caspian Pipeline Consortium occurred conveniently for Russia. Moreover, there are few alternative transport routes for the Caspian Pipeline Consortium. They believe that this is Russia's response to Western sanctions. While Russia has not declared an energy embargo, it is a way to get revenge on the West by cutting oil supplies. This situation can be viewed as a collapse or inefficiency of the multi-vector approach in the energy sector of Kazakhstan because Kazakhstan was dependent on transportation from this consortium. In addition, it shows the vulnerability of Kazakhstan from any conflicts with the great powers. The fifth interviewer agrees that Kazakhstan is limited in energy export routes. He also claims that it is too early to predict a collapse. However, it is already clear that it will be complicated to adhere to a multi-vector policy in a full-scale war between Russia and Ukraine. The seventh interviewer also believes that this is not an accidental accident at the Caspian Pipeline Consortium but a disturbing maneuver on the part of Russia.

Nevertheless, still, Kazakhstan has alternative export routes. In addition, Kazakhstan's multi-vector foreign policy cannot be convenient for everyone, and in the future, Kazakhstan will have to make difficult decisions that will alienate Russia. The second interviewer does not think this is a collapse of the multi-vector policy in the energy sector since Kazakhstan has alternative transport routes. Alternative exits and projects such as the "Belt and Road Initiative" and the "Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan" pipeline help reduce this vulnerability. In line with the coming events and changes in Russia's power posture and policy, Kazakhstan is likely to monitor opportunities to diversify its markets for energy exports.

Scientists in an interview commented on this situation not as a collapse of the multi-vector approach but as a miscalculation of management in the energy sector. Because the correct use of a multi-vector approach is to multiply the ways of transporting energy resources, this situation should show the true nature of the multi-vector policy and create new ways of transporting energy resources. The fourth interviewer believes this is just a long-term management miscalculation in the industries working with hydrocarbons. Using Russia's pipelines is cheaper in the short term, so they decided not to put in the effort to build their

pipelines. Kazakhstan suffered in this crisis not because of the collapse of the multi-vector system but because of the poor management of resources in the long term.

The third and first interviewees also argue that it should not be seen as a collapse of the multi-vector energy policy of Kazakhstan; on the contrary, it should provide a wide range of opportunities in terms of further diversification of energy export routes. This incident may indicate a mistake in Kazakhstan's foreign policy to rely entirely on one direction. The multi-vector approach provides alternatives for the transportation of energy resources even in the event of a closure of one direction, as in the case of an accident in the Caspian Pipeline Consortium. Therefore, this incident might indicate the wrongness of relying entirely on one direction.

As a result of analyses and findings, it can be seen that the hypothesis: "In Kazakhstan, multi-vector policy intensifies competition for influence and dominance over energy resources and export routes between the great powers" is valid. Interviewers' arguments that Kazakhstan's preference for a multi-vector policy rather than close relations with one great power allowed new players to join the region. Thus, the United States and China joined the region dominated by Russia. China and Russia, in particular, demonstrate the importance of dominating Kazakhstan. In addition, the interviewers believe that if Kazakhstan were in close relations with Russia and did not use a multi-vector policy, there would be no place for fierce competition between such powers as China, the USA, and Russia. Recent events, such as sanctions against Russia or the accident at the CPC, have shown Kazakhstan's vulnerability to the great powers. Any dispute between them affects the diversification of Kazakhstan's energy sector. Many experts believe that the multi-vector policy of Kazakhstan gravitated towards Russia, and this situation should change the geopolitical course of Kazakhstan. In addition, recent events have revealed weaknesses in far-sighted multi-vector planning in the energy sector. Because of the lack of suitable alternative routes to the CPC, Kazakhstan was left under the blows of the conflict between the West and Russia. Kazakhstan should have had many alternative transport routes with the correct use of a multi-vector policy in the energy sector. Overall, the multi-vector policy of Kazakhstan has a good effect on the country's energy diversification. Although this increases competition between the great powers, it allows Kazakhstan not to depend on one country.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The research question of this study is: "What impact has the multi-vector strategy of Kazakhstan had on the country's energy diversification?". The literature review examined the definition of a multi-vector policy used for Kazakhstan. The multi-vector policy of Kazakhstan is primarily stable and balanced relations with countries. This geopolitical course reduces dependence on any superpower (Nurshanbayev, 2020). Since Kazakhstan is an energy-rich country, foreign policy is important for its development. Many scholars have noticed how Kazakhstan uses unique methods in foreign policy to develop the energy sector. Also, there were situations when Kazakhstan successfully negotiated with different countries for its benefit, thanks to a multi-vector policy and negotiations. It helps it balance the presence of different countries in the energy sector (Hanks, 2009). Despite the great success of Kazakhstan in using multi-vector, this study analyzed some findings that affected the bad side. This study examined a gap that was omitted in the literature review. Kazakhstan's multi-vector policy may lead to growing competition between the great powers to dominate the energy sector. Many scientists have noticed the repetition of the great game in the present time. The involvement of various countries in the region, especially in the oil sector, will lead to the emergence of this game. In addition, the struggle of large countries and companies. The large oil reserves of these countries and the growing need for energy resources exacerbate this struggle (Karasac, 2002). This work analyzed the problem of the confrontation of the great powers and its importance for the country's energy diversification by using a qualitative research method and secondary resources. The interview with Kazakhstan scientists helped answer this study's research question. Interviewers believe that Kazakhstan's multi-vector policy and energy resources have allowed other great powers like the United States and China to enter its energy sector. In addition, from secondary resources, there is a noticeable increase in competition for dominance in the energy sector due to the current dependence on oil and gas. It shows how the multi-vector policy of Kazakhstan intensifies competition for influence and dominance over energy resources and export routes among the great powers. In addition, this problem is relevant now because of the Ukrainian crisis. The analysis of this event shows how vulnerable Kazakhstan is to the relations of the great powers. Kazakhstan has suffered from the US sanctions imposed on the CPC in Russia. In addition, the interviewers believe that eventually, Kazakhstan will have to choose a side because it will be difficult to conduct a multi-vector policy with a tightening confrontation between the West and Russia. Many interviewers felt that Kazakhstan would shift its policy towards the West and Europe, moving away from Russia and China. In

addition, studies of these events have highlighted the weakness of multi-vector policy in the energy sector. Because of the CPC accident, considered a response to Western sanctions, Kazakhstan has stopped increasing by 80 percent of its exports (Alimova, 2022). On the one hand, this research shows the validity of the hypothesis that Kazakhstan's multi-vector policy increases competition for dominance in the energy sector. However, the answers to the research question of how Kazakhstan's multi-vector policy affects the country's energy diversification turned out to be positive. The interviewers believe that Kazakhstan's multi-vector policy was the right choice for Kazakhstan rather than a closed economy or a partnership with one country. The current confrontation between the countries may increase interest in Kazakhstan. Moreover, Kazakhstan receives investments from various countries and the more Kazakhstan's importance in the international arena increases. In addition, the interviewers believe that Kazakhstan, using a multi-vector policy in the energy sector, will not depend on the monopoly of one power. As with the CPC situation, Kazakhstan would have more alternative transportation routes with the correct use of a multi-vector policy. Moreover, another finding is that a multi-vector policy will increase Kazakhstan's strength and reduce other countries' motives to attack Kazakhstan. Therefore, in the end, even though Kazakhstan's multi-vector policy leads to increased competition for the dominance of the great powers in the energy sector, this allows us to improve this sector. It is clear that Kazakhstan also benefits from the competition of the great powers. They are building new pipelines and investing in the energy sector, developing this industry in Kazakhstan. This situation is more like a win-win game and not how researchers of the new great game expect the zero-sum game.

Of course, this study has limitations. The study helped consider a multi-vector policy's impact on the energy sector using a qualitative method, but this study may be subjective. However, it also helps to expand the study by considering various ideas.

Because the study yielded an unexpected result that could be explored in future studies, Kazakhstan's multi-vector policy has intensified competition for influence in the energy sector and Kazakhstan's export routes. However, a multi-vector policy and even this competition for dominance can improve the country's energy diversification. Therefore, it is necessary to consider this question: To what extent does Kazakhstan benefit from competition for dominance among the great powers. In addition, as a result of this study, another topic for further research is shown. As we can see, Kazakhstan's multi-vector policy contributes to improving the country's energy diversification. However, the question also arises whether

Kazakhstan is using a multi-vector policy for its transport purposes correctly since studies of the situation in the CPC have shown that Kazakhstan has transportation disruptions due to the lack of appropriate transport lines. Theoretically, according to the scientists interviewed, the multi-vector policy was used to increase the number of transit routes and did not depend on the results of one country. Therefore, for a better understanding of these results for future research, it is proposed to consider the correspondence between the success of the multi-vector policy of the fuel and energy complex in theory with actual practice.

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