

# KAZAKHSTAN'S EXPANDING MULTI-VECTOR FOREIGN POLICY - THE JAMESTOWN FOUNDATION - 03.01.2023

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Recently, Kazakhstani Energy Minister Bolat Akchulakov declared that, while his country maintains close ties with Russia and Uzbekistan on gas transit, no formal discussions have been held regarding the possible formation of a gas union, the trilateral initiative suggested by Russian President Vladimir Putin (Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, November 29). Kazakhstans refusal would not be as surprising had it not been for the incredible geopolitical upheavals that have begun to transform the wider Eurasian region since Russias re-invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. As a result, this changing environment has enabled the Central Asian states to become more vocal about their own interests, pushing against Moscows imperial ambitions.

Moreover, Kazakhstan has been emboldened by a strategic relationship that Ukraine, Georgia or Moldova do not enjoy □□□□□□□ its deepening cooperation with Beijing. China is not only an aspiring global power with heaps of cash, but it also shares a long common border with Kazakhstan, thus placing Beijing as a necessary counterbalance to Moscow. Kazakhstan is also a critical artery within Chinas sprawling, yet struggling Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and serves as a gateway for Beijing in its push to reshape Eurasian geopolitics.

Chinas special relationship with Kazakhstan was reflected in Chinese President Xi Jinpings choice to visit Astana for his first official visit abroad after the COVID-19 pandemic (Fmprc.gov.cn, September 15). During his trip, the Chinese leader underscored Beijings support for its neighbors independence and pledged to defend Kazakhstans territorial integrity. The message, at the time, was read as a warning to external powers, but the veiled nature and timing of the statement could indicate that it was meant directly for Russia.

**To read the rest of the article: https://jamestown.org/program/kazakhstans-expanding-multi-vector-foreign-policy/**

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