

Kazakhstan's Policy on Turkey within the Context of Domestic Structural Dynamics

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Introduction

The study discusses how effective the domestic structure factors (political parties, structure of the presidency and the government, bureaucratic institutions, non-governmental organizations, interest groups, public opinion, media and the leader) of Kazakhstan, which have emerged as an independent state in international relations scene in 1991, in determining her policy on Turkey. The issue is discussed with a view to prepare the ground for the idea that common language, race, religion and history factors are significant in formation of Kazakhstan's policy on Turkey, however they are not only decisive alone to elucidate the study both theoretically and conceptually. The objective of this study is neither to analyze all aspects of Kazakhstan's policy on Turkey nor to measure the success of this policy and nor to determine whether a break in this policy is experienced or not. The main aim is actually to develop a detailed analysis on to what extent the domestic structure factors are effective in determination of Kazakhstan's policy on Turkey.

While examining the Kazakhstan's policy on Turkey, this study has been given emphasis to the impact of political parties, President Nursultan Nazarbayev, the structure of the regime, bureaucratic institutions, interest groups, NGOs, public and the media. It was discussed how individuals (leaders) political preferences, transnational relations, bureaucracy, international actors and the domestic structure of countries became so important for foreign policy described by systems until the collapse of the Soviet Block and how foregoing factors shaped foreign policy (Evangelista, 1995: 9). Description of the foreign policies of the states according to factors that affect the external relations and which connect the state and the society to each other have gained importance in terms of creation of the study. Evolution process of Kazakhstan, from a country closed to transnational relations for many years, to skeptical but curious, shy but sociable Kazakhstan which is closely monitoring developments of the world has made it necessary to examine to what extent the country's domestic structure has affected this process in the formation of Kazakhstan's policy on Turkey.

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Domestic Structure of the Republic of Kazakhstan

The following conclusion has been reached as regards the domestic structure in Kazakhstan due to this requirement. Inasmuch as a state-centered approach is implemented in Kazakhstan, the presence of strong state versus weak society is in question. Equality of the people in the country has been guaranteed by laws enacted through powerful public authorities. State control is a both necessary and desirable concept. The right of speech of institutions forming the state is framed through the powers granted to them. There is insufficient institutionalization in state institutions. Bureaucratic organizations are very prone to the pressure of interest groups. Much as the Kazakh society has an immutable society image, it is actually a dynamic society open to changes. There are numerous groups with different structures within the country. The structure of the society is heterogeneous due to the coexistence of many people belonging to different ethnicities. Inasmuch as the state is single-headed the state bureaucracy gives direction to policy simply by ordering. The determining authority in domestic and foreign policy is the state and the state bureaucracy. Much as the effect of the public opinion in shaping domestic and foreign policy is often limited in a country like Kazakhstan, where there is a powerful and dominant leader, it can rarely influence the decisions taken depending upon the conditions. Effectiveness of the public opinion is neither high enough to make a revolution in foreign policy nor it strong enough to paralyze the system. Be that as it may, it cannot be said that the public opinion has zero effect. However, the segments which can affect the domestic and foreign policy in Kazakhstan consists of big business owners and political elites grown under Soviet culture rather than the masses. As such, dynamics of national politics is constituted by the conflict and competition between the elites rather than the social processes. In other words, political competition is based on the struggle between elites fed by economic developments (Yılmaz, 2016: 248).

Objective and Scope

The objective of this study is neither to analyze all aspects of the Kazakhstan's policy on Turkey nor to measure the success of this policy and nor to determine whether a break in this policy is experienced or not. The objective actually is to develop a detailed analysis on to what extent the domestic structure factors are effective in determining Kazakhstan's policy on Turkey. Books published on the subject in Kazakh language, internet news, web address of the official institutions, newspaper archives and the interviews conducted (Kazakh-Turkish) have been utilized as the primary source to carry out this examination. Books and articles of Western and Turkish scholars and thinkers and internet resources have been employed as secondary sources with a view to establish the conceptual and theoretical framework of the subject. It has

been tried to highlight where Turkey's place is in the foreign policy of Kazakhstan based on strong bilateral relations as well as multilateral and active participation through provision of insight as to the theoretical background effective in determination of Kazakhstan's policy on Turkey.

The hypothesis of the study is that the common understandings of language, race, religion and history between Kazakhstan and Turkey are not the sole determining factors about Kazakhstan's Turkey policy. Kazakhstan's Turkey policy is rather determined by the country's domestic structural factors such as presidency, the leader, interest groups, NGOs, political parties, bureaucratic institutions, public and media.

Answers to four basic questions were sought in order to verify the hypothesis of the study in this context. The data obtained from the answers to the questions verify the hypothesis of the study. The first question for which answer is sought in this study, focused on the Kazakhstan's policy on Turkey, is what factors characterize the domestic structure of the Kazakhstan are. In general, factors such as the processes in constitutional change process in the country after the declaration of independence, the functioning of the government structured with the structure of presidency and the regime, rising or declining power of parliamentary from time to time, development of civil society organizations and governmental institutions, participation of the people in the political system, impact of the elite on decision-makers as well as public, the media and most importantly the leader seem to characterize the domestic structure of Kazakhstan.

Turkey's place in Foreign Policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan

The second question is where Turkey's place in foreign policy of Kazakhstan is and what factors determine the Kazakhstan's policy of Turkey are. According to 2014-2020 Foreign Policy Concept of Kazakhstan (Republic of Kazakhstan, 2014) Kazakhstan, "attaches great importance to the strengthening of comprehensive cooperation carried out with the Republic of Turkey by taking into consideration common historical roots and cultural values of the two nations". This document reveals that Turkey, rather than playing a decisive role in the Kazakh foreign policy, is a tool of stability mechanism and although Turkey is the first country to recognize the independence of Kazakhstan and is known by Kazakhs very well, its place seems to have come after Russia, China, the USA, EU and CIS countries in the Kazakh foreign policy (Mominkulov, 2014). Because when the statistical information shown in the study is considered, in a recent report published by the Kazakhstan Central Bank on investment and total annual foreign trade of Kazakhstan, it is observed that closeness in the political arena at a certain level is not reflected

to the economy between the two countries. Turkey's share of only approximately 2.5 percent in annual foreign trade of Kazakhstan is evidence to this. Furthermore, United States has received the largest share with \$46 billion in Kazakhstan's investments at abroad while Turkey has not even entered the top ten preferred countries for Kazakhstan's investments (Kazakhstan Ulitik Bankı, 2015). Turkey's not being among the top ten preferred countries shows that close political relations of the two countries has not reflected to the economic relations.

Considering the factors that determine Kazakhstan's policy on Turkey, it can be observed that factors such as common historical and cultural unity, post-independence economic and cultural relations, education, regional and international cooperation and Nazarbayev's leadership play an important role. However, in addition, domestic structure factors affecting Kazakhstan's policy on Turkey such as political system, political parties, the structure of the presidency and the government, interest groups, public and media are also clear to be very effective to a great extent. This is because factors such as Turkey's being the first country to recognize the independence of Kazakhstan and its very high importance according to the people and the state, institutions supported by Turkey, operating in Kazakhstan since 1992 (TİKA, TÜRKSOY, Ahmet Yesevi University), Turkey's place in the country by Turkish businessmen, warm feelings of Kazakh people to Turkey and Turks and President Nazarbayev's attaching importance to relations with Turkey affect Kazakhstan's policy on Turkey directly (Yılmaz, 2016: 16-17).

Leader Factor

The third question in the study is the question as to President Nursultan Nazarbayev who is the most important and most highlighted domestic structure factor in Kazakhstan and to what extent his leadership affect Kazakhstan's policy on Turkey. The political system formed with the independence of Kazakhstan determines the country's domestic and foreign policy while Nazarbayev has played the biggest role in the determination of this policy. Nazarbayev has administrated the politicians managing the country like a conductor and he has the profile of a leader who passes different ideas from his own filter, follows global developments closely, gives importance to regional integrations and good neighborly relations as well as he is a patient, reliable and credible leader committed to bring Kazakhstan to the level it deserves. He has established close relations with Turkey even before the declaration of Kazakhstan's independence and developed ideas as to participation to international organizations in which both countries can take place. Especially in Turgut Özal's presidency period, he developed a serious sympathy to Turkey and made everyone, partial or impartial, think that Turkey has the

title of the leader of the Turkish world. Nazarbayev has attended to all of the Turkish world state leaders' summit initiated through Özal and later continued and contributed to the researches of common history and culture and introduction of them to the world.

Nazarbayev has a direct effect on Kazakhstan's policy on Turkey due to the reasons such as Nazarbayev's inviting Turkey to Eurasia Economic Union membership (Mominkılov, 2012), Kazakhstan's receipt of military equipment aid from Turkey during relations conducted with NATO (Kazakhstan time, 2005:1) and again Kazakhstan's belief that Turkey's EU membership endeavor will lead to the EU membership of Kazakhstan in the future (Nargis Kassanov, personal interview, May 2014). His acceptance of Turkey's leading role to unite Turkish states under one roof by virtue of the Turkish Council (Kürşad Zorlu, personal interview, September 2015), his persistently highlighting the issue on every occasion that relations based on politics, investment, transportation, tourism and trade should be increased (Tüymebayev, 2012: 8-11) and his taking steps to bring the relations to legal basis by signing the Strategic Cooperation Agreement in 2009 with Turkey (Egemen Kazakhstan, 2009: 1). Hence, Nursultan Nazarbayev as the head of state, has a big influence on Kazakhstan's Turkey policy as much as historical unity, kinship, language and cultural similarity.

Perception of Turkey

The last question asked to verify the hypothesis of the study is how the perception of Kazakhstan in its approach to Turkey is and to what extent this perception affects the policies thereof towards Turkey. Turkey, having an expansion in its foreign policy subsequent to Central Asian Turkish states' gaining their independence, has based the policies towards Kazakhstan on the discourses of father's land, being elder brother and a role model country. On the other hand, Kazakhstan has adopted the discourse of being a brother country with the same root and language. Although not at the desired level yet, there is a growing positive perception among peoples. It can be seen in the field studies and the scanned sources that positive perception towards Turkey in Kazakhstan is generally higher among those who are acquainted with Turks and those who have visited Turkey at least once. Basing on the author's fieldwork carried out in Kazakhstan, it has been observed that negative perceptions about Turks and Turkey are based on prejudices rather than personal observations and experiences (Yılmaz, 2016: 210). Kazakhs have knowledge about Turkey generally by virtue of Turkish products, Turkish TV series and movies, Turkey's tourism potential and facilities and academics, workers and businessmen who visit the country (Mominkılov, 2013).

Turkey's being the first country to recognize the independence of Kazakhstan and its being never to be forgotten by the Kazakhs has created a positive perception of Turkey. In other words, it has been observed that the recognition of the independence of Kazakhstan by Turkey as the first country and having the same language have created a positive perception on Turkey in the minds and memories of Kazakhs (Aydingün and Tüfekçioğlu, 2012: 117-118). However, based on Turkey's being in the seventh place in the indicator study carried out recently to measure the sympathy value of Kazakhs towards twelve countries, it can be understood from this study that Turkey and Turks are not adequately known among Kazakhs and the connections and communication between these two communities are not yet at the desired level (Akyürek and Bilgiç, 2012: 56-57). However, the historical ties between the two countries, adoption of the same language and religion, Turkish businessmen's teaching business and trade to numerous Kazakh citizens subsequent to Kazakhstan's independence by making business in Kazakhstan and Turkey's being the most preferred country among Kazakh people in terms of tourism (TÜRSAB 2010: 1-4), projects conducted to improve education and cultural relations through TİKA, Yunus Emre Turkish Culture Center and Ahmet Yesevi University were opened in Kazakhstan by Turkey's initiative and Kazakhs' positive perception of Turkey constitute the factors playing role in shaping Kazakhstan's policy on Turkey (Anar Somuncuoğlu, personal interview, October, 2015).

From Emotional Discourse to Pragmatic Approach

Much as Kazakhstan's policy of Turkey was trying to be created basing on common values such as language, ancestry, religion and kinship in the 1990s, both the economic transformation experienced in Kazakh domestic politics and active, versatile and integration-based policies in foreign policy following the 2000s have caused this policy to be established within a logical framework. This logical framework, considered to be a multi-faceted policy, offers an approach in which efforts are exerted to balance the strategic partnership carried out with Russia and China by relations carried out with the United States, the EU (the Western world) and the Islamic world (Yılmaz, 2016: 253).

It has been declared that the existing relationship has to be improved to a legal partnership from emotional ties by virtue of the strategic partnership agreement signed by the two countries' leaders in 2009. This agreement is considered to be the biggest step taken forward for institutionalizing bilateral relations (Egemen Kazakhstan, 2009: 1). This case reveals the fact that Nazarbayev has adopted a pragmatic approach focused on diplomacy, economy and investment during the period of Abdullah Gül's presidency compared with the rhetoric of

brotherhood, kinship and friendship adopted during Turgut Özal and Süleyman Demirel's presidency periods. Namely, friendship and brotherhood rhetoric voiced through President Nazarbayev has left its place to discourses of economy, investment and mutual cooperation over time. In other words, Nazarbayev has adopted a logical and rational discourse like economy, investment and reciprocity rather the emotional rhetoric of brotherhood and kinship during the process from Özal period until Gül period. This situation reveals the fact that Kazakhstan's policy towards Turkey has improve to a rational and logical view from a sentimental approach (Yılmaz, 2016: 115-120).

Place of Turkey in Kazakhstan's foreign policy has not become clear until recently because of the insecurity and reluctance experienced in economic relations and mutual diplomatic negotiations. Economic and political instability experienced in Turkey in the 1990s, inadequate number of Turkish personnel serving in Kazakhstan, the Turkish world of discourse's becoming a domestic political issue in Turkey as well as hardship experienced in creation of Kazakhstan's political structure and democratic culture's weakness and Moscow-oriented expectations in Kazakhstan have made Kazakhstan reluctant in forming policies towards Turkey. The most important factor in this is Turkey's starting emotional discourse and continuing of this discourse, after the Turkish states gain their independence and considering the peoples of these states naive and their leaders inexperienced and not being able to explain the Turkish model adequately in Kazakhstan (Tokayev, 1997: 524).

On the other hand Nazarbayev, who made his first foreign visit to Turkey, has stated that 21st century will be the Turkish century and stated that guidance of a country like Turkey, with which Kazakhstan has common political, cultural and economical ties as well as the common history and cultural values, has given Kazakhstan a serious moral support (Aydın, 2001: 380). However, Kazakhstan experiencing the building process of nation-state and national identity, hosting a significant Russian minority in the territory thereof, attracting serious foreign capital after independence, has learned that it can be a new bridge between Asia and Europe as an alternative to Turkey by opening its doors to the outside world and by establishing a direct connection with it.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Kazakhstan has understood that despite the change of governments in Turkey, there will not be a significant development in Turkey's Central Asian policy as it comprehended that common language, race, religion and history factors would no longer be enough in determining policies towards Turkey. Therefore, in this study, in terms of Kazakhstan's Turkey policy, president of the country, the structure of the regime, political parties, bureaucratic institutions, NGOs, the public, media and interest groups have emerged as a result that they play a more important role than the abovementioned factors. The most prominent of these factors is the Head of State Nursultan Nazarbayev. Kazakhstan, under Nazarbayev leadership has become a country in which a modern life is lived in conformity with its own traditions and in which people from different religions and ethnic groups can live in peace.

Nazarbayev has implemented a Kazakh model which has successfully switched from the socialist economic model to free market economy adapting quickly to the international community which he says first economy and then democracy without ignoring the realities of the country under the umbrella of a regime criticized to be authoritarian. It was concluded that although, when Kazakhstan's policy on Turkey is in question, the common language, origin, religion and understanding of history seem to be important determinants, however, domestic structure factors such as structure of the regime, the president, bureaucratic institutions, political parties, non-governmental organizations, interest groups as well as public and the media seem to be more decisive.

Kazakhstan is a country which has to pursue a consistent foreign policy in order to ensure the security of its borders and protect its independence. This understanding named as multi-vectoral policy in the literature has been established as a requirement of geographic location. It was needed to provide some recommendations with this study as to Kazakhstan's policy on Turkey in order that the subject is understood better and Kazakhstan-Turkey relations are based on stronger grounds by taking lessons from the past. Factors such as culture, language and common origin are tools that can strengthen the hand of both countries in the implementation of various projects. In this regard, Kazakhstan and Turkey should increase the cultural and humanitarian cooperation in addition to the economic relations and build public diplomacy projects to make people come closer and therefore projects implemented in the national media of both countries should be developed. Since 21st century is the age of communication and technology and they eliminate the concept of space and time, cohesion of the people must be provided in this regard. Emphasis should be placed on information technologies and educational and cultural

policies must be strengthened. In order to strengthen this policy, consulates and ambassadors who are foreign policy representatives of the two countries must be specialized bureaucrats who have served in the region who know the area and the local languages and the persons governing the state are required to apply the decisions of such experts accordingly.

Inasmuch as Kazakhstan has rich oil and economic growth based on oil revenues will not be long-term alternative ways of production and seek a comprehensive industrialization should be realized. Thus, Turkey as a country relatively developed in industrial fields, must initiate a similar industrial development in Kazakhstan and should have more active roles as an economic actor in determination of Kazakhstan's policy on Turkey. One of the most important factors for Turkey to affect Kazakhstan's policy is tourism. Therefore, should place ads on billboards in the streets of Kazakhstan to promote Turkey. Turkish Airlines should organize more and cheaper scheduled flights from Astana, Shymkent and Almaty in particular to Antalya, Izmir, Istanbul and Ankara. Turkey must promote the existing tourism potential thereof in a better way and increase the number of Kazakhs who come to Turkey each year by virtue of reasonable hotel and ticket prices, and thus sees attract the Kazakhs who see Turkey through the Turkish television series. In this sense, Turkish television series should be shown more in Kazakh televisions.

Considering that Turkey has a very weak perception management and is particularly unable to manage its own perception in Kazakhstan and the Turkish world, Turkey's utilization of the opportunity of explaining the Turkish image to public through the media can be considered as a factor that will contribute to Kazakhstan's policy on Turkey. This is because presence of surplus values such as history, origin, language and religion required for the establishment of a close cooperation platform between Kazakhstan and Turkey may not be sufficient for the creation of a strategic cooperation partnership. For this purpose the partnership background has also be known and heeded among people who share this.

Data obtained for this study has revealed the fact that Kazakhstan's Turkey policy is also shaped by the steps taken by Turkey towards Kazakhstan and therefore Turkish government has to see the region from a wider perspective. In addition to economic benefits that Turkey gains, she needs to take into account the interest of Russia, US, EU, Iran and China in Kazakhstan and act accordingly. Number of mutual visits of both countries' presidents must be increased in order to create institutionalization in reciprocal relations. The future and relations of Kazakh people with Turkey will be ensured through realization of heart and mind unity as well as material and spiritual unity, growing up hard-working generations with high moral values who keep up with

contemporary developments who have a sense of justice and who are patriotic with the virtue of being tolerant to other nations. In this context, time should not be lost any more on the issue of how Kazakhstan-Turkey relation is expected after Nazarbayev. The future of relations between Kazakhstan and Turkey will be very bright if both countries show the same faith and sincerity and establish a solid multifaceted cooperation and solidarity.

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