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Sommario/riassunto	Kazakhstan's foreign policy, since its independence, has successfully avoided favoring any one country based on what Astana styles as a "multi-vectored" approach to foreign policy. Yet in terms of its conduct of defense and security policies, this paradigm simply does not fit with how the regime makes policy in its most sensitive areas of security cooperation. Indeed, its closest defense ties are still with Russia, which have deepened and intensified at a bilateral level as well as through multilateral initiatives in the context of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). This is most evident in a close analysis of the evolution of its armed forces, including various efforts to reform its military and achieve mobile, combat capable, and professional forces. Since September 11, 2001 (9/11), Kazakhstan's defense posture has favored closer links with the United States and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), while it has also pursued inconsistent efforts to extract better defense cooperation from Moscow. In 2003, shortly after the U.S.

intervention in Iraq, President Nursultan Nazarbayev took the controversial step of agreeing to send engineers from Kazakhstan's embryonic peacekeeping battalion (KAZBAT) to support demining efforts placed under Polish command. Of course, the "deployment," though politically useful for Washington in displaying evidence of the diverse nature of the "coalition of the willing," was also beneficial for a highly ambitious political elite in Astana keen to showcase Kazakhstan's armed forces and project a positive image for the Kazakhstani military and its contribution to the new international order. It was not without domestic risk, since it represented the first instance of troops being sent beyond the region by any state within Central Asia, but this was managed carefully through the state controlled media and despite opposition from a pacifist contingent within Kazakhstan's parliament. Nevertheless, the Kazakhstani authorities gauged the risk to be manageable, since these engineers were not deployed operationally in the sense of taking on active peacekeeping duties; they were unlikely to see action in the theater itself. Moreover, the high profile and overemphasized importance of this cooperative initiative, which finally ended with the withdrawal of KAZBAT from Iraq at the request of the Iraqi government in October 2008, reaped dividends for the Nazarbayev regime as it could claim to be active in international stabilization efforts. In reality, the elements of KAZBAT were transported to Iraq using U.S. military transport aircraft since Kazakhstan lacked strategic airlift capabilities, and were maintained and helped through U.S. assistance. In the aftermath of Uzbekistan's alienation by the West following the tragic events in Andijan in May 2005, Kazakhstan was temporarily willing to acquiesce in being regarded as the region's security leader; NATO officials referred to Kazakhstan as NATO's "anchor" in Central Asia. This, in fact, is way beyond Kazakhstan's capabilities. The authorities have since mostly dropped these claims from official discourse. In other words, by paying close attention to KAZBAT, an entirely false impression of a largely unreformed and cumbersome post Soviet legacy force is engendered, with all the issues this entails, ranging from bullying, poor morale, underfunding, limited combat capabilities, and corruption at senior levels. This is also worsened by the manifold problems stemming from Soviet or Russian manufactured military equipment and hardware, often aging and desperately in need of repair, which severely inhibits the operational capabilities of Kazakhstan's air force, for example. Kazakhstan proved willing to receive much aid and assistance for its military from Western donors, principally the United States, Turkey, and NATO. Astana deepened its partnership with NATO and made efforts to strengthen its defense ties with Washington by agreeing to implement longer-term cooperation plans in the frameworks of "5-year plans" agreed between the U.S. Department of Defense and Kazakhstan's Ministry of Defense. In January 2007, Nazarbayev appointed Daniyal Akhmetov as the country's first ever civilian defense minister. This, coupled with Kazakhstan securing the Chairmanship of the OSCE in 2010, seemed to herald promising achievements in its defense posture, but these hopes have rapidly faded since. Understanding the problems, challenges, and continued failings of the defense leadership in Kazakhstan involves first appreciating how limited its military reforms have proven in practical terms. Akhmetov was reportedly shocked in the early part of his tenure to discover how poorly trained, disciplined, and often corrupt Kazakhstan's armed forces remain, despite several years of the state talking up "military reform." Although corruption is something of a sine qua non in the region, it is particularly crucial to recognize its debilitating effect on efforts to reform the armed forces.

This will persist as an obstacle to achieving progress in successfully implementing military reform for the foreseeable future. Also, despite Kazakhstan's closer relations with Western militaries, it has in real terms deepened and strengthened its ties with Russia. The close nature of this defense cooperation relationship, reflected in Kazakhstan's new military doctrine, its intensified military and security training and educational agreements, as well as stepping up the frequency of military exercises, is also coupled with shared multilateral ties within the frameworks of the CSTO and SCO. Washington's military assistance programs have therefore often run into geopolitical issues, such as the limiting effect on its objectives emanating from Kazakhstan's political and defense relationship with Russia, or sensitivities to its close proximity to China, as well as internal issues surrounding Astana's military reform agenda. Defense spending in Kazakhstan will also be subject in the short to medium term depending on how the government handles its unfolding financial crisis and continued exposure to the global financial crisis, coupled with the sliding price of oil on the world markets. These issues, sharply refocused by the Russian military exposure of weaknesses within Georgia's armed forces despite several years of time-phased U.S. training and equipment programs, serve to question the aims, scope, and utility of American defense assistance programs calibrated to enhance Kazakhstan's military capabilities. While Astana grapples with these internal issues and remains politically sensitive to the anxieties of Moscow as it perceives U.S. training and aid to the Kazakhstani armed forces, success will be modest. New deeper and more closely monitored programs are needed and, combined with multilateral cooperative initiatives, should be a matter of urgent priority; otherwise, such programs will underperform and languish in the repetition of the misjudgements of the past.--P. v-viii.

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