ABSTRACT

of the dissertation summitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)
in the educational program "8D03106 - Regional Studies"
by **Usserova Karlygash Kairatovna**
on the topic "Eurasian Regionalism and the Multi-Vector
Foreign Policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan"

General characteristics of the dissertation research. The dissertation research is devoted to a comprehensive analysis of Eurasian regionalism as a foreign policy environment for the formation and implementation of the multi-vector foreign policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan. The paper examines theoretical and methodological approaches to understanding modern regionalism, reveals the evolution of Kazakhstan's multi-vector foreign policy in the context of the transformation of the international system, and analyzes the mechanisms of the country's participation in key integration and cooperation formats of the Eurasian space. Special attention is paid to the role of Kazakhstan as a middle power, a regional intermediary and a strategic hub using institutional, transport, logistics, energy and diplomatic tools to strengthen sovereignty and international subjectivity.

The relevance of the dissertation Relevance of the research topic

Against the background of global changes after 2014, the Ukrainian crisis, the sanctions wars and the growing confrontation between the United States and China, the pandemic and the outbreak of the Russian-Ukrainian war, the world has become less stable and less predictable. The world is moving from a global to a regional order. After the end of the cold war, the world was dominated by the idea of globalization, i.e. the free movement of goods, technologies and ideas. Interdependence and mutual influence led states to a unified economic and political system.

However, by 2010 it became obvious that globalization was no longer the main force. The world is moving towards a regional structure in which important functions are performed by regional organizations in the form of integrations, collaborations and formats such as the EU, EAEU, ASEAN, SCO, OTG, etc. States will unite in order to protect their national interests, ensure security, and reduce dependence on external centers of power.

Eurasia is becoming one of the key regions of the world where the processes of regionalism and regionalization are actively taking place. Kazakhstan, being in the center of Eurasia, acts as a link between various integration projects and regional initiatives. Important logistics routes, including the Middle Corridor, pass through the territory of Kazakhstan. This indicates that Kazakhstan is becoming an important link in the formation of regional relations in the context of changing geopolitics.

In addition, Kazakhstan continues to pursue a multi-vector foreign policy. However, multi-vector is not a fixed construct, it develops and evolves. At the first stage, multi-vector approach was a special form of preserving the independence and territorial integrity of the young republic. At the second stage of the evolution of multi-vector approach, there is an active search for sustainable balancing and

economic benefits. At the third stage, multi-vector approach acquires the features of hedging, which involves active risk management and risk diversification in the context of new geopolitics.

In the dissertation, the concept of "hedging" is used as an analytical tool for interpreting the multi-vector foreign policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan. This term allows us to explain the combination of cooperation and maintaining a balance in the foreign policy course of the state.

Thus, the relevance of the dissertation research lies in how Kazakh Eurasian regionalism has become an important part of the multi-vector foreign policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan. In the context of the changing world order, Kazakhstan uses its participation in organizations such as the EAEU, SCO, OTG, C5+1 to strengthen sovereignty and adapt to new challenges.

An analysis of these processes will help to better understand how the multi-vector nature of the Republic of Kazakhstan is developing within the framework of Eurasian regional projects.

The purpose of the dissertation research is to analyze the multilevel process of regionalism as a form of the country's participation in the Eurasian processes and the evolution of a multi-vector foreign policy in the context of global changes. Based on the analysis, it is necessary to identify how the mechanisms of regional cooperation contribute to strengthening the country's sovereignty, as well as the adaptation of the Republic of Kazakhstan to geopolitical transformations.

To achieve the purpose of the dissertation, the following tasks should be solved:

1. To reveal the theoretical foundations of regionalism, to systematize the main and special approaches, including the concepts of multi-vector and the theory of the middle power, for the analysis of the foreign policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

2. Identify the essence of Eurasian regionalism and analyze Kazakhstan's place in its system, identifying key indicators and tools for the country's adaptation to the new global reality.

3. To determine the methodology of level analysis as a tool for studying Eurasian regionalism and the multi-vector foreign policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

4. Analyze the transformation of modern Eurasian regionalism and determine Kazakhstan's place in the changing regional architecture based on the principle of multi-vector approach.

5. To investigate the institutional and functional forms of Eurasian regionalism, identify their opportunities and limitations, and analyze the role of the Republic of Kazakhstan in their development.

6. Apply a level analysis to assess the effectiveness of Kazakhstan's participation in various formats of Eurasian regionalism, to identify the specifics of the implementation of national interests at the micro, meso and macro levels.

7. To trace the evolution of the multi-vector foreign policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan from the strategy of survival of a small power to the formation of an

independent course of a medium power within the framework of Eurasian regionalism.

8. Analyze the multi-vector approach through a level analysis, identifying the mechanisms of institutionalization, energy diplomacy, and adaptation to a changing geopolitical environment.

9. Evaluate the transformation of multi-vector after 2022, recording the transition of balancing to active hedging.

The hypothesis of the study is that Kazakhstan's multi-vector foreign policy is a key tool, and regionalism is one of its main forms of implementation. By participating in Eurasian associations, the country strengthens sovereignty, reduces external risks and maintains a balance of interests between the centers of power. Regional formats allow Kazakhstan to adapt to changing geopolitics and strengthen its position.

Theoretical and methodological basis and research methods

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The theoretical basis of the dissertation consists of classical and modern theories of international relations (structural realism, neoliberal institutionalism, constructivism), as well as concepts of regionalism, new regionalism, the theory of the middle power, complex interdependence and regional security complexes. The concept of institutional hedging, developed in the framework of studies of the foreign policy of medium-sized states, is also used.

Methodologically, the work is based on level analysis (micro-, meso-, macro-level), comparative and case-study approaches, structural-functional, institutional and system analysis. The application of a tiered approach makes it possible to integrate the political, economic, institutional and identity dimensions of Eurasian regionalism.

The scientific novelty of the work lies in a comprehensive analysis of Kazakhstan's Eurasian policy. **The dissertation offers new approaches, which are as follows**:

1. For the first time, the methodology of level analysis was used in the analysis of Kazakhstan's multi-vector foreign policy within the framework of Eurasian regionalism. This approach allows us to consider the strategy of a middle power that conducts its foreign policy in the context of changing geopolitics.

2. It is shown that modern Eurasian regionalism is not a closed post-Soviet space, but is a hybrid model that combines elements of economic, institutional and socio-cultural interaction. In this system, Kazakhstan acts as a moderator, initiator of multilevel interaction, and uses institutional mechanisms to maintain a strategic balance.

3. It is proved that Kazakhstan's multi-vector approach is a form of flexible leadership in which the country uses various areas of cooperation (Western, Chinese, Turkic, southern) to strengthen its independence and effectively manage interdependencies in the changing Eurasian system.

4. The concept of hedging as a mechanism through which Kazakhstan combines participation in formalized (EAEU) and more flexible (SCO, OTG)

cooperation formats is substantiated. In this context, the multi-vector approach is interpreted not as a reactive policy, but as a structured model of institutional hedging that ensures the strengthening of Kazakhstan's sovereignty and increased subjectivity in the new Eurasian architecture.

The main provisions of the dissertation submitted for defense:

1. It is advisable to consider modern regionalism as a multi-layered and dynamic process, the nature of which remains the subject of theoretical discussion. While realism and neorealism emphasize it as a tool for redistributing power and balancing forces, liberal approaches emphasize the institutionalization of interdependence, and constructivism as the formation of identity and norms, the theory of the middle power and the concept of multi-vector approach allow for a new interpretation of the strategy of small and medium-sized states. In this context, regionalism is not only a form of integration, but also a mechanism for balancing, hedging and strengthening the transforming world order.

2. The application of level analysis has made it possible to comprehensively reveal the multi-vector nature of Kazakhstan as a system of interaction at the global, regional and national levels, identifying mechanisms for the realization of national interests through participation in various formats of Eurasian regionalism. A level-by-level analysis makes it possible to explain how the multi-vector foreign policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan ensures its stability in a complex geopolitical environment.

3. Eurasian regionalism is considered in the dissertation as a structural foreign policy context. In this environment, the Republic of Kazakhstan acts not only as a participant in integration processes, but also as an active actor influencing their directions through institutional mechanisms, the development of transport and logistics corridors and energy interconnectedness. The use of both formalized associations and alternative formats of cooperation makes it possible to diversify foreign policy vectors, strengthen strategic autonomy and consolidate Kazakhstan's role as a key logistical and coordinating hub of the Eurasian space.

4. Multi-vector approach is not only a political course, but also the structural basis of Kazakhstan's Eurasian regionalism, ensuring adaptation, balancing and hedging in the face of global uncertainty. After 2022, Kazakhstan used a range of institutional, energy, diplomatic and digital tools to strengthen its subjectivity and promote a pragmatic model of regionalism based on openness and sustainability. Multi-vector approach is a flexible form of foreign policy that combines a balance of power, institutional cooperation and strategic hedging, which allows it to be considered both as a unique national strategy and as an example of the foreign policy behavior of medium-sized states.

5. Kazakhstan's multi-vector foreign policy in the context of Eurasian regionalism has evolved from a small-power survival strategy to an institutionalized model of hedging and strategic balancing based on multi-format participation in regional associations (EAEU, SCO, Organization of Turkic States, C5+1). This transformation reflects the transition from reactive adaptation to active risk hedging and expansion of foreign policy opportunities, which allows Kazakhstan to

strengthen sovereignty, strengthen international subjectivity and use multi-vector approach as a mechanism of stability in the changing geopolitical configuration of Eurasia.

Scientific and practical significance of the research

The theoretical conclusions and empirical results of the dissertation can be used to further develop conceptual approaches to the study of regionalism, multi-vector foreign policy and strategies of the middle Powers. The practical significance of the work lies in the possibility of using its provisions and recommendations in the activities of the foreign policy and analytical bodies of the Republic of Kazakhstan in developing foreign policy strategies, participating in regional formats and assessing the risks and opportunities of Eurasian cooperation.

Approbation of the work

The main provisions of the dissertation were discussed at the meetings of the Department of International Relations and World Economy of the Al-Farabi Kazakh National University. 6 scientific articles in Russian and English have been published on the topic of the dissertation, including one article published in a peer-reviewed scientific journal included in the Scopus database and 5 articles in journals recommended by Science and Higher Education Quality Assurance Committee of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Republic of Kazakhstan, which reflected the main results of the research.

The structure of the dissertation research

The dissertation consists of an introduction, three chapters, a conclusion, and a list of references.