

## Briefing on Kazakhstan

Represented By:

Sammy Cuautle, Evan Gordon, Kellan Kong, Ian Mansfield, Jeffrey Radin, Sophie Sanders, Emma Silverman, Isabella Szpiegiel

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## Introduction

Kazakhstan is a country whose history is deeply intertwined with Russia. Being the last country to declare independence from the Soviet Union, we feel that Russian culture dominates our own Kazak culture. We would like to be recognized as a unique nation, independent of Russia so that we don't fall prey to Russia in a similar way that Ukraine did. Additionally, the continuing expansion of ISIS is something that we find very threatening. We believe that our country is at great risk, especially if ISIS turns towards Russia as their next victim. Overall, we would like to protect the rights of our Kazak people from threatening neighbors and organizations.

### Key Points

1. Kazakhstan's large Russian population affects Russia's view of it, in terms of Russia believing Kazakhstan is rightfully their territory. This is similar to Russia's view on Ukraine and may cause similar issues in Kazakhstan in the future.
2. Kazakhstan faces economic turmoil due to the low oil prices. Our government has already cut the 2015 budget by 10% and although we are trying to bring in foreign investment and have implemented a 10-year anti-corruption program, our economy remains unstable.
3. Kazakhstan's economy is not sustainable because of an overreliance on Russia, this is a pressing issue that demands attention.
4. Northern Kazakhstan has become a highly volatile area for Russia, with both pro-Russian Kazak separatists and ISIS recruiters dominating the area.
5. The potential of ISIS going through Kazakhstan into Russia would largely destabilize Central Asia and puts Kazakhstan at risk of becoming another Syria.
6. Putin doesn't recognize Kazakhstan's statehood and the fact that Kazakhstan is an independent republic.
7. The potential for polarization between ethnic Kazaks and Russia-Kazaks is a threat to the internal harmony in Kazakhstan.

Sophie Sanders

## Background

The Republic of Kazakhstan is a country located in Central Asia, northwest of China, boarding the Caspian and Aral Sea. The capital of Kazakhstan is Astana, with Almaty being the largest city. Kazakhstan is the 9<sup>th</sup> largest country in the world and the world's largest landlocked country, with a total territory of 2,724,900 square kilometers. Kazakhstan shares borders with China, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. The terrain of Kazakhstan includes a vast flat steppe as well as rock canyons, hills, deltas, snow-capped mountains, and deserts. Kazakhstan has major deposits of petroleum, natural gas, coal, iron ore, manganese, chrome ore, nickel, cobalt, copper, molybdenum, lead, zinc, bauxite, gold, and uranium.

With a population of 17,948,816, Kazakhstan is the 61<sup>st</sup> most populated country in the world, although, due to the large area, its population density is among the lowest at less than 6 people per square kilometer. While Kazakh is the state language, Russian is the official language of communication in Kazakhstan. Approximately 63% of the population in Kazakhstan is Kazakh and 23% Russian, meaning Kazakhstan has the largest number of ethnic Russians outside Russia. The primary religion in Kazakhstan is Muslim (70.2% of the population), although Russian Orthodox comprises approximately 26% of the population. Kazakhstan is a republic with a presidential rule. The current, and only president of Kazakhstan is Nursultan Nazarbayev. Kazakhstan possesses enormous fossil fuel reserves and has a large agricultural sector, exporting oil and oil products,

natural gas, ferrous metals, chemicals, machinery, grain, wool, meat, coal. Because Kazakhstan is landlocked, the country relies on its neighbors to export its products, especially oil and grain. Kazakhstan is the 12<sup>th</sup> largest oil exporter in the world.

Nomadic tribes of the Turkic and Mongol descent originally populated Kazakhstan. In the 13<sup>th</sup> century, Mongol tribes led by Genghis Khan invaded Kazakhstan and assimilated with the Turkic tribes until the 15<sup>th</sup> Century when the Kazakhs emerged as a distinct ethnic group. By the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, Russians began to advance into Kazakhstan during Russia's quest to expand into Central Asia and by the mid 19<sup>th</sup> Century, Kazakhstan was officially recognized as part of the Russian Empire. After the Bolshevik Revolution, when Russian became the Soviet Union, there was a brief period of autonomy when Kazakhstan became an autonomous republic of the USSR (1920) before becoming the Kazakh Soviet socialist Republic in 1936. Kazakhstan quickly became an integral part of the Soviet Union. Soviet repression and collectivization brought mass hunger in 1932 leading to a great famine in Kazakhstan, an estimated 38% of the Kazakhstan population died during this time. During the 1940s, Kazakhstan experienced population inflows of millions of people including Koreans and Germans, as they were forcibly moved by the Soviet Union. Deportees were interned in some of the largest Soviet labor camps in Kazakhstan. In 1949, the first nuclear test explosion was carried out in eastern Kazakhstan leading to catastrophic ecological and biological consequences. In 1954, under Nikita Khrushchev's demand, about two million people, mainly Russians, moved to Kazakhstan during the campaign to develop virgin lands, dropping the proportion of ethnic Kazakhs in the republic 30%.

Beginning in 1986, mass demonstrations by young ethnic Kazakhs took place, protesting Mikhail Gorbachev's replacement of Dinmukhamed Kunayev, an ethnic Kazakh with Gennadiy Kolbin, an ethnic Russian, as head of the Communist Party of Kazakhstan (CPK). Discontent in Kazakhstan continued to grow and finally, on December 16, 1991, Kazakhstan became the last Soviet republic to declare independence. Kazakhstan's communist-era leader, Nursultan Nazarbayev, became the country's first President, and remains to be the President of Kazakhstan today. In 1992, Kazakhstan was admitted into the United Nations and in 1993 a new constitution increasing presidential powers was adopted and a major privatization program was launched.

Since independence in 1991, Kazakhstan has been seeking equally good relations with its two large neighbors, Russia and China as well as with the United States and the rest of the Western world. In 2008, due to the sharp fall of oil and commodity prices, Kazakhstan plunged into recession. Kazakhstan, has, however, rebounded well and is looking into diversifying markets. Although Kazakhstan has long been one of Russia's closest partners, both economically and geopolitically, Kazakhstan's ties with Russia have recently weakened over the Ukraine Crisis. In 2014, Kazakhstan gave Ukraine humanitarian aid and January 2015 to help ease the humanitarian crisis, Kazakhstan sent aid to Ukraine's southeastern regions.

Kellen Kong

## Energy

We have been an oil producer since 1911, but production became most meaningful in the 60s and 70s, eventually reaching 1 million bbl/d in 2003. Of the former Soviet Republics, Kazakhstan is second to only Russia as an oil producer. Recently the Energy ministry was restructured because energy production and exportation is so important to the country. Kazakhstan is far from international oil markets so it primarily trades, via pipeline, to closer locations. Russia has been a longtime trading partner, as has the rest of Europe, and China has recently become a major partner—recently signing 30 new cooperative agreements worth \$10 billion with the country. China is now Kazakhstan's largest export market. Evidenced by these relationships is the fact that energy has always allowed cooperation between Kazakhstan and its surrounding countries. Although on an international scale we oppose the West because of the country's support for Russia, the smaller Eurasian window is where the country operates the most. By allowing pipelines to travel through the country, as well as having our own, Kazakhstan has been able to take advantage of its positioning and resources to forge alliances and continually cooperate with the major powers on its borders.

Kazakhstan is also considered a littoral Caspian state. Since no country bordering the Caspian Sea has been able to lay claim to it—due to the ongoing debate of its status as a sea or lake—so many countries have a part in what it provides. The Caspian Sea is a very important port for Kazakhstan. There are currently major routes running through the

Caspian Sea and, via rail and the Caspian Sea, Kazakhstan is able to export oil and other energy sources West. Barges containing mass amounts of oil are also sent across the Caspian Sea. The Caspian Pipeline Consortium to the Black Sea port of Novorossiysk is another major crude oil pipeline. The Caspian Sea and Black Sea act as major transportation systems for the country, their ports and connections providing Kazakhstani oil to major partners.

The drops in oil prices hurt us, especially since some our biggest export markets—Ukraine and Russia—are being affected the most by sanctions and other various happenings in the world. This of course means that the economy of the country heavily relies on the future of the oil market. The success of the oil market can only lead to the continued growth of our country. However due to our lack of international connections, not only are the dropping oil prices hurting us directly, but the Ukraine situation also has the country worried about what Russia will do next. The indirect effect on our country is that Russia may now turn to northern Kazakhstan and treat it similarly to the Ukraine situation. Northern Kazakhstan is not only predominantly ethnically Russian, but it is also the main source of domestic pipelines. Although the country will continue to support Russia geopolitically, and work with them as trade partners, there is an underlying fear of what Putin might do in his crusade to protect ethnic Russians.

As stated previously, domestic pipelines are primarily located in the northern part of Kazakhstan. Domestic pipelines are not connected to other population centers below the north. The southern part of Kazakhstan is densely populated and the country is currently building the Beineu-Bozoi-Shymkent pipeline (to be completed in 2015) that will supply approximately 350 Bcf per year to regions along the way, eventually

connecting with the current pipeline in the south and cutting import costs there. It will also connect to China to continue exportation there. Another major pipeline that will be built is the one through the China-Russia gas deal. It shows China's faith in building pipelines through certain areas into Russia and it helps Russia's declining economy. It also allows for China to begin working in the Arctic. It is yet to be seen how that will affect Kazakhstan, but China may be able to produce more of its own oil via the Arctic territory being shared with them by the Russians. The Eurasian community being built is stronger if they work together and Kazakhstan, being apart of that community, will only benefit from it.

As of right now, the country can only hope for a recovery of the oil market and a rekindling of Russian-Western relations—not because the country needs the West, but more so because they need a stronger Russia. It would also be beneficial if our current Eurasian alliance with Russia and Belarus grows in the number of countries involved, as well as in strength on an international level. The future of Kazakhstan relies heavily on the combined success of the country itself and others around it—which relies even more heavily on the recovery of oil. Becoming a bigger trade partner with China will help as Russia's decline seems to have no end in sight, but the Kazakhstani government has to be concerned as to how the oil market decline will affect them more directly and how Russia will view them, especially its ethnically Russian population.

Emma Silverman

## Human Rights

While Kazakhstan does not uphold international human rights standards, we believe we are justified in limiting our people's freedoms of religion and their right to assemble. Since 2014, Kazakhstan has adopted several new criminal, executive, criminal procedural and administrative codes that have concerned the European Union, the United States and Great Britain. Their concerns are unreasonable as we retain the right to govern as we see fit. Protests, for example, must be disbanded because they pose a threat to the community.

In addition, Kazakhstan refuses to decriminalize speaking out against the government and inciting social, racial, or religious discord. Our criminalization of these acts is put in place for the protection of both the government and the people. Limiting newspapers, internet access, and other forms of media is necessary for protection against lies and foreign enemies.

While the United Nations Committee Against Torture was concerned after their November review of Kazakhstan, we assure you that the Kazakstani government takes torture allegations very seriously. In the cases of Oleg Evloev and Rasim Bairamov, the committee accused us of not investigating such allegations. However, a criminal case was recently opened for Bairamov.

We are careful to document all minority religious groups. Groups that do not follow the proper procedures or individuals who practice banned religions are persecuted.

Kazakhstan has recently adopted a new law on trade unions. We do not believe workers should have the right to strike or negotiate with those in charge.

There is a trafficking issue with both women and children. Profits go to transnational organizations and homosexuals. The criminal economy runs on child slavery. The issue is worse in Kazakhstan than other former Soviet countries. Recently, our government has ratified several conventions such as the UN Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others, the 1926 Convention to Suppress the Slave Trade and Slavery and its Protocol of 1953, and the 1956 Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, Slave Trade, and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery as well as worsened penalties for the removal of organs and tissues from human corpses. This was done under the suggestion of the Human Rights Commission in 2008. We would like to find a way to protect our women and children from this horrible practice.

Jeffrey Radin

## Economy

Kazakhstan's economy is surprisingly robust—it is the largest in Central Asia. This is primarily attributable to our enormous reserves of both oil and other minerals and metals. Kazakhstan also has large agricultural and services sectors. In the last 17 years, Kazakhstan's Economic Freedom Index score has seen one of the 20 greatest increases, and its overall score exceeds the world average. Our economy is predicated on the successful extraction and trade of its natural resources.

Kazakhstani monetary policy has been prudent. In 2002, Kazakhstan was the first former Soviet satellite state to receive an investment-grade credit rating—indeed, Kazakhstan was the first former Soviet state to repay loans from the International Monetary Fund. This was in 2000, seven years ahead of schedule.

Oil and gas are Kazakhstan's bread and butter. In the medium term, our reserves give us the potential to be a world-class oil exporter. Our reserves have engendered an infusion of foreign capital—the hallmark of which is a joint venture partially owned by petroleum giants ChevronTexaco, ExxonMobil, KazMunaiGas (a Kazakhstani oil company), and LukArco (a Russian oil company). As with any petroleum-fueled economy, Kazakhstan's future economic success is in large part dependent on the price of oil and its ability to find and develop future deposits.

The Kazakhstani government, however, is cognizant of this. Despite positive macroeconomic indicators, our economy is over reliant on oil and extractive industries.

We have sought to change this, and have initiated a vast diversification program, investing in and attempting to develop the transport, pharmaceutical, telecommunications, petrochemicals and food processing sectors. In 2010, we joined the Belarus-Kazakhstan-Russia Customs Union, hoping it would boost foreign investment and enhance trade relationships.

Mineral commodities also comprise a significant chunk of the Kazakhstani economy. We are among the leading producers of ferrous metals, titanium sponge, cadmium, magnesium, rhenium, copper, bauxite, gallium and zinc. We are also the leading producer of uranium—accounting for 35% of the global output—and have the world’s second biggest uranium reserves.

Kazakhstan also has a large agricultural sector. Our steppe terrain accommodates both livestock and traditional farming, especially of grain. We also produce potatoes, vegetables and melons.

Our biggest trade partner, in terms of both import and export, is China. Our other largest export partners are, in order, Italy, Netherlands, France, Switzerland, and Austria. Our largest import partners, after China, in successive order, are the Ukraine, Germany, and the United States.

Isabella Szpigiel

## Sovereignty

Kazakhstan became a sovereign state from the Soviet Union in June of 1990. Nursultan Nazarbayev, the First Secretary of the Communist Party of the Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic at the time, fought hard to secure republic control of Kazakhstan's enormous mineral wealth and industrial potential. Nazarbayev began preparing Kazakhstan for much greater freedom. When Kazakhstan declared its independence from the Soviet Union, Nazarbayev won an uncontested election for president in December 1991 and has stayed president ever since. Today, Kazakhstan is a presidential republic, where the President of Kazakhstan is head of the state and nominates the head of government. The President is elected by popular vote for a five-year term. However, Nazarbayev has a special amendment for him, in which he can seek re-election as many times as he wishes since he is Kazakhstan's first president. President Nazarbayev's presidential powers have expanded into which only he can initiate constitutional amendments, appoint and dismiss the government, dissolve Parliament, call referendums at his discretion, and appoint administrative heads of regions and cities. The president appoints the prime minister, who serves at the pleasure of the president, chairs the Cabinet of Ministers and serves as Kazakhstan's head of government. There are three deputy prime ministers and 16 ministers in the Cabinet. Karim Massimov became the Prime Minister in April 2014. Lastly, the leadership in Kazakhstan has pursued a

balanced, multi-vector foreign policy that never gave a totally dominant preference to any specific major power.

Since our independence, Kazakhstan has established the fundamental institutions of a civil society, such as a constitution recognizing a separation of powers, an electoral process, a professional judiciary, a deliberative parliament, a free press, and rights of speech, assembly, and religious freedom. Furthermore, civil society has become more diverse, visible, and robust, in which 400 NGOs were established in the early 1990s. Nevertheless, democratic reform, human rights, or good governance do not have strong domestic support or adequate local resources for their work and are heavily reliant on international donors. Consequently, media rights are inauthentic and political opposition is all but nonexistent.

Ever since our independence, Kazakhstan has dealt with a very diverse nation that includes 140 ethnic groups. The two largest are Kazakhs and Russians. Ethnic Russians comprise about 20% of the state, but they are mostly concentrated in the north along the frontier with Russia. While there were small spouts of Russian separatism in the 1990s, our ethnic Russian population has been largely peaceable for the past two decades. In fact, we have accommodated our ethnic Russian population more than any other non-Russian post-Soviet state. A survey showed that 56% of Russians in Kazakhstan said that their local areas were good places to live for them, and only 25% of Russians said they wanted to move to some other country. Consequently, the population of Kazakhstan believes that the current borders of Russia and the post-Soviet states are ones that should be permanent. For Kazakhs, they treasure being independent and sovereign, especially after a fight for independence that they finally won. For the rest of the ethnicities,

knowing they have been exemplar in their ethnic harmony, they don't believe in changing the borders as much, as demonstrated also by ethnic Russians who enjoy living where they do in Kazakhstan.

Since most of Kazakhstan's population is satisfied with the borders, the annexation of Crimea triggered a negative reaction. In our eyes, Crimea's annexation demonstrated that Russia lacked respect for sovereignty in the post-Soviet states. Ethnic Kazakhs tend to be wary of threats of sovereignty and nationhood emanating from Russia, while ethnic Russians in Kazakhstan broadly welcome the Kremlin's self-appointed right to intervene in foreign countries to protect the interests of Russian speakers abroad. Nevertheless, many ethnic Russians support Nazarbayev's policies and don't show much interest in Russian irredentism. Kazakhstan celebrates Independence Day in December, in which Nazarbayev calls for patriotism and unity among all ethnicities in Kazakhstan. He asks all citizens to defend our sovereignty, especially after a time where Russian President Vladimir Putin had claimed that Kazakh statehood is essentially an artificial construct. According to Putin, Nazarbayev "created a state on territory where no state had ever existed." As a result of Putin's remarks as well as his encroachment on the sovereignty of Ukraine, the Russo-Kazakh alliance has been on a thin thread. Because of different viewpoints between Russia and Kazakhstan, changes in the near future might involve a looser Russo-Kazakh alliance in which our dependence on Russia will lessen.

Sammy Cuautle

## Security

One of the largest security threats Kazakhstan faces is the growth of radical Islam. While Kazakhstan is a secular nation, 70% of the nation's citizens are Muslim and Islam plays a big role in the nation's public life. But, the chances of internal threats is extremely low; most radicals and radical ideologies enter through foreigners. Wahhabis and Salafists entered the country illegally in search of work. Often, their missionary and recruitment work is funded covertly by Arab nations. While they have managed to infiltrate some schools, the work of the government to cement moderate Islam has proved effective enough to dilute their influence. In addition, radical Islam has successfully destabilized neighboring nations Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. We have taken steps to strengthen our borders and enforce border policy to prevent radicals from those nations and Afghanistan to enter. Kazakhstan has also formed partnerships with key nations to combat terrorism in the nation and abroad. China, Russia and the United States are our allies, who provide security funding and support. Due to security concerns, we have not allowed the opening of an American military base nor offered use of our airports. Yet, Kazakhstan consistently extradites terrorist suspects, allowed the use of airspace and cooperate with the CIA and FSB.

Another security threat we face is trafficking, specifically drug trafficking. Kazakhstan is an important crossroads for trafficking to Russia and Europe. Our border agency was formed in 1992, the first of any post-soviet state and funding for it has grown

as well as its status. Many drug smugglers enter through Uzbekistan. In response, a 28 mile fence was built along a high risk area and heavily populated areas. Human trafficking is another issue we have tackled. Corruption has been cracked down upon, as institutional corruption often facilitates the trafficking of people and contraband. Police officers have been arrested and prosecuted their roles in illegal trades. Aside from the police, those caught trafficking people have received heavier sentences than ever: anyone caught faces 15 years in prison. The government has also taken steps to prevent and support victims. Among other public awareness campaigns, thousands of booklets have been distributed to the poor to prevent them from falling to trafficking rings. The government also monitors migration patterns (as Kazakhstan still has nomadic people) to find any irregularities which may signal human traffickers. As for the victims, legal assistance is provided.

Kazakhstan's armed forces have been noted for their swiftness and efficiency. The nation represents stability in a region that has lacked it and severely needs it. The military has responded well against armed threats, such as terrorism, and biological threats, like SARS in China. Illegal immigration has become a serious issue, and in response, border patrol agents are deployed more frequently and more often. Due to membership in the SCO, the aggression of the military is curbed, as it is required to notify member states of any movement or actions.

Evan Gordon

## Terrorism

At the beginning of his presidency in 2000, Vladimir Putin met with leaders of the Russian community in Kazakhstan who explained to him the situation they faced in the country. This meeting resulted in a proposal of a massive departure of the remainder of Russians from Kazakhstan. It was suggested that these migrants would revitalize depopulated areas of central Russia and provide a counterweight to the demographic decline of Russians within the Russian Federation. The plan was never initiated.

Around the same time in early 2000, a small group lead by Viktor Kazimirchuk called "Rus" planned to take over the administration of Kazakhstan's northeastern city of Oskemen near the Russian border, declare the region Russian territory, and appeal to Moscow to incorporate the area into the Russian Federation. There were 22 people in the group, 12 of which were Russian nationals. When the group was detained, their weapons consisted of a few grenades, hunting rifles, ammunition for automatic weapons, and some Molotov cocktails.

Kazimirchuk claimed he had support from the Russian population in northern Kazakhstan and from officials in the Russian government, though he did not name anyone specifically. However, this gained a lot of attention in Russia. The Russian Embassy in Kazakhstan offered to hire Moscow attorneys for the accused and Russia's

human rights commissioner at the time appealed to President Nazarbaev to show compassion for the group as their trial date approached.

Zamirichuk claimed there was discrimination in East-Kazakhstan not only against Russians, but against Russian speakers, whom he claimed accounted for 70 percent of the population of the province. "The opinion of everyone was that we did not have anything in common with Kazakhstan, that this was Russian territory and that the situation was like that, say, in Crimea," Kazimirchuk said in 2007 quite forbearingly. What Kazimirchuk said then is eerie when viewing the situation in eastern Ukraine today.

President Nazarbayev on 18 April 2006 said the KNB needed to do more to protect the nation's security. In 2006, relations with the United States were at an all time high, and there was much Western pressure on our government to join in the war on terror. Many groups were banned from the country and deemed terrorist organizations even though they were not at all active within Kazakhstan. However, the organizations *are* considered as terrorist within the Russian Federation.

Today, we face a much greater threat of terrorism than ever before. ISIS has arrived on Russia's doorstep, taking refuge in the muslim-dominated northern borders of Kazakhstan. Worldwide attention was drawn to this when ISIS released a video showing the execution of two FSB officers at the hands of a Kazak child soldier. The video opens with a pair of testimonies – two men, claiming their work within Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB), admitting their espionage within ISIS's ranks. The first identifies himself as Mamayev Jambulat, who told his interviewers that he was sent to gather info on the Islamic State and to get closer to an ISIS member. The second soldier is named as Ashimov Sergey Nikolayavich, who said that he previously worked in Russian

intelligence, and was sent to locate and kill a specific ISIS leader. As it is, the FSB has remained mum on the identities of the two men.

Russia, being both a Christian country and a staunch supporter of al-Assad is an enemy of ISIS. ISIS leaders have not only been able to embed themselves within northern Kazakhstan, but have also started the mass recruiting of many Kazak child soldiers. What is most significant about this is that discontent amongst Kazak separatists has not improved since Putin took office in 2000. Where ISIS is currently located happens to be the same region dominated by pro-Russian separatists. For the Kazak government, they have virtually lost control of entire border. While ISIS now controls some areas, citizens that wish to secede dominate others. The issue, however, is more interesting for Russia. In the same area of Kazakhstan reside Kazak terrorists whom Putin feels sympathy for and wants to incorporate into the Russian Federation, and also Kazak Muslims that wish to see the end of Christendom and the entire Western world. It is very possible that as ISIS will spread, Putin will fear the loss of his Kazak-separatist pro-Russian friends and possibly annex Northern Kazakhstan in an attempt to secure Russian loyalty and fight the Islamic state.

Ian Mansfield

## Ukraine

The ensuing war in Eastern Ukraine raises serious questions about the Kremlin's motives among the former Soviet states on Russia's periphery. Is Putin to be trusted? After Georgia, Moldova, and now Ukraine, where will the Kremlin not exercise military and economic warfare to uphold its regional hegemony? What is evident in the conflict in Ukraine is that Russia is willing to start a war in a former Soviet state to check US and NATO encroachment in Eastern Europe. But what is also becoming increasingly clear is Russia's "Eurasian Policy," which entails creating a block of former Soviet states—and perhaps China—whereby it remains the dominant power. As a former Soviet nation that has an ethnically Russian population over 20% percent, for Kazakhstan this policy poses serious existential concerns in regards to our sovereignty.

A historical perspective is imperative when analyzing the Ukraine crisis and the possible consequences it poses for former Soviet states, Kazakhstan included. Not only were the territories of Ukraine and Kazakhstan under Russian rule for hundreds of years during Czarist times, but they also maintained under the auspices on mainland Russia for most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century while in the USSR—Ukraine and Kazakhstan both declared statehood in 1991. The fact that less than a generation ago, these two countries were under Soviet rule, explains why Russian is willing to use the military force and economic influence it wields over its neighbors to "reclaim the motherland." Furthermore, Putin has stated, in response to the annexation of Crimea, that Russia maintains the right to protect

ethnic Russians anywhere in Eastern Europe. And what is more concerning is the Kremlin's wish to protect "Russian interests" within these states. It is possible that due to the precedent set by Russia's annexation of Crimea, northern regions of Kazakhstan, with their ethnically Russian populations of over 50%, may be seized by the Russian Federation and be subject to a referendum. Needless to say, this presents a grave national security concern for Kazakhstan due to our long border with Russia and our large number of ethnic Russians.

Demographic concerns are not only factor at play when it comes to the relevance of the Ukraine crisis in Kazak nationally security policy. Economic ties and dependence on the Russian state also are at play in regards to the two nation's relationship. As Kazakhstan commits 9% of its exports and receives 36% of its imports from Russia, we are dependent on Russia for sustainable GDP growth and security. It is essential that we maintain the economic benefits of trading with our greatest economic partner, without giving up our political sovereignty. We are unclear as to whether a Eurasian Union can accomplish this, but with each day this conflict ensues in eastern Ukraine, we are increasingly wary of such a Union.

Ever since Putin's rise to power in 2000, Russia has been looking more and more like its Soviet predecessor. Though the Kremlin is not trying to replicate the Soviet Union on all fronts—they are ignoring the ideology—, it appears as though they are ushering in a new era of regional power and influence. This notion of a resurgence of Russian nationalism and foreign aggression raises serious concerns, especially after seeing what Russia is prepared to do in Ukraine for its objective. Their actions in Ukraine are reminiscent of the 1930s when Russia committed genocide in Ukraine, starving 7 million

people, for whatever skewed ideological end Stalin had. A single leader, as Putin or Stalin, with no checks and balances leaves the entire nation and world subject to his or her whims. The Ukraine crisis begs the question: if Kazakhstan had a strong presence on the Black Sea, would it be us fending off “Russian separatists” and not Ukraine?