

**THE INFLUENCE OF ELITE PERCEPTION AND INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM ON
KAZAKHSTAN'S DECISION TO ABSTAIN IN RESOLUTION S/2018/355**

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Abstract

Kazakhstan is a country located in Central Asia that has a close and cordial relationship with Russia. However, Kazakhstan decided to abstain during the Resolution S/2018/355 proposed by Russia in UNSC. Therefore, the research question proposed by this study is as to why beside the close and cordial relationship between Kazakhstan and Russia, did the former chose to abstain on UNSC S/2018/355 which dealt with the issue of Syria? In order to answer the proposed research question, this author utilizes three main theoretical frameworks. Firstly, neoclassical realism to address the importance of elite perception and international system in explaining Kazakhstan's Syria policy. Secondly, the formation and influence of elite perception. Lastly, the role of international system in shaping the elite perception and its influence in Kazakhstan's foreign policy towards Syria. This thesis discovers three main findings. First, Kazakhstan's elite perception towards Syria is influenced by its history and geographical proximity. Second, Russia and the West's interference happens amidst the uncertainty of international system after the Annexation of Crimea. Third, the uncertainty is accompanied by elite perception of its limited national capabilities compared to other great powers in the conflict which leads Kazakhstan to play it safe.

Keywords: Kazakhstan, Foreign Policy, Elite Perception, International System, Resolution S/2018/355

Abstrak

Kazakhstan adalah sebuah negara yang terletak di kawasan Asia Tengah yang memiliki hubungan dekat dengan Rusia. Namun, kedekatan hubungan antara dua negara kembali dipertanyakan setelah Kazakhstan memutuskan untuk abstain pada Resolusi S/2018/355 yang digagas oleh Rusia di UNSC. Dengan demikian, pertanyaan penelitian yang diajukan pada penelitian ini adalah mengapa Kazakhstan tetap memutuskan untuk abstain pada Resolusi S/2018/355 yang berfokus kepada Suriah meskipun kedua negara memiliki hubungan bilateral yang tergolong dekat? Dalam rangka menjawab pertanyaan penelitian tersebut, penulis menggunakan tiga kerangka pemikiran utama. Pertama, realisme neoklasik untuk menjelaskan pentingnya persepsi elit dan sistem internasional dalam menjelaskan kebijakan Kazakhstan terkait Suriah. Kedua, proses pembentukan dan pengaruh persepsi elit. Ketiga, peran sistem internasional dalam membentuk persepsi elit dan pengaruhnya dalam kebijakan luar negeri Kazakhstan terhadap Suriah. Penelitian ini menemukan tiga jawaban utama. Pertama, persepsi elit Kazakhstan sangat dipengaruhi oleh sejarahnya dan kedekatan geografis. Kedua, adanya ketidakpastian dalam sistem internasional pasca Aneksasi Krimea yang disebabkan oleh intervensi Rusia dan Barat. Ketiga, ketidakpastian ini diikuti dengan persepsi elit terhadap kapabilitas nasionalnya yang tergolong terbatas apabila dibandingkan dengan negara-negara besar lainnya yang mendorong Kazakhstan untuk mengambil jalan tengah.

Kata kunci: Kazakhstan, Kebijakan Luar Negeri, Persepsi Elit, Sistem Internasional, Resolusi S/2018/355

Introduction

Kazakhstan has a close bilateral relationship with Russia. The closeness between two countries is evident in three main areas of cooperation, namely economy, politics, and military. In terms of economic relations, Russia is Kazakhstan's first source of imports and exports. In 2017 alone, the volume of trade between Russia and Kazakhstan reached 2.425 billion United States Dollars (USD) (Aliyeva 2017). In terms of investment, Kazakhstan has a total investment of three billion USD in Russia and Russia has more than ten billion USD of investment in Kazakhstan (Kremlin 2017). In other fields of economic cooperation, both Kazakhstan and Russia are founding members of Eurasian Customs Union (ECU) which later in 2015 changed its name to Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) (Satpaev 2015). In the field of military cooperation, this closeness is reflected through more than 60 agreements on defense and military cooperation (Paramonov and Stolpovski 2008). Kazakhstan is the first Eurasian country to sign Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Security with Russia in 1992 which served as the foundation of military cooperation in the future (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2018). In terms of politics, both countries are supportive of each other which is evident during Russia's annexation of Crimea. Kazakhstan avoided condemnation towards Russia's actions and stated that Crimean referendum was a form of freedom of expression and that Russia's actions or decisions are understandable (Weitz 2014). Based on all these actions, Sultangaliyeva (2016) stated that Kazakhstan is Russia's closest ally in Central Asia and undoubtedly the only Russia's alliance in Eurasia that is unconditional in nature.

However, Kazakhstan displayed a contrasting position during the Syrian Civil War crisis that happened in 2018. The problem started when the Assad regime was believed to carry an attack against its own people using chemical weapons (BBC 2018). The USA and its coalition interfered by conducting an attack in one of Syria's provinces, Douma that was believed to store the chemical weapon. The USA accused the Assad regime as the wrongful party that caused large deaths among civilians. However, Russia believed that there was an attack by chemical weapons, but it was not conducted by the Assad regime. Further, Russia accused the USA and its coalition as the ones who are responsible for the chemical attack and to frame Russia and Syria as the perpetrators (BBC 2018). The intervention sparked anger from Russia and called for an emergency meeting in United Nations Security Council (UNSC) on 14 April 2018. During the UNSC meeting, Russia initiated a draft resolution which focused on efforts to condemn USA and its coalition because their attack on Syria could not be justified. This draft resolution would later be known as S/2018/355. This resolution did not pass since it was only supported by Russia, China, and Bolivia. However, there was one interesting event from the voting process, which was Kazakhstan's decision to abstain in the resolution (BBC 2018). During the session, Kazakhstan made an ambiguous remark regarding the intervention in Syria. Kazakhstan stated that military intervention was the last resort and it had to be authorized by the UNSC. However, Kazakhstan also stated that there should be an independent investigation regarding the usage of chemical weapons by the Assad regime. It is evident through the statement that Kazakhstan sounded doubtful to take any exact position even though Kazakhstan had a close relationship with Russia that has been mentioned in the first paragraph.

Further, Russia was very disappointed with Kazakhstan's decision to abstain. Although Russia fully understood that the resolution would not pass, Russia still thought that a symbolic support from Kazakhstan was highly important. Russia's disappointment towards Kazakhstan was very evident in its media discourse. Russia's state-owned media, Russia-1, stated that Kazakhstan would be the next Euromaidan that marked a long-lasting political crisis in Ukraine and the Annexation of Crimea by Russia. Further, One of Russia's head of Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Konstantin Kosachov, stated that Kazakhstan's decision to abstain had a negative impact towards the bilateral relations of Russia and Kazakhstan which has been going for two decades (Kumenov 2018). Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to discover the reason why Kazakhstan chose to abstain despite the closeness in the bilateral relations. Therefore, this paper is going to utilize the approach of elite perception

and international system in foreign policy formulation. This article will be divided into four main parts. First, the significance of Neoclassical Realism in explaining the influence of elite perception and international system in foreign policy formulation. Second, Kazakhstan's elite perception towards the Syrian Crisis. Third, international system before and during the Syrian Crisis. Fourth, Kazakhstan's elite perception and international system perceived by the elite. Fifth, conclusion.

Neoclassical Realism: Between Elite Perception and International System

Neoclassical realism a middle ground between *Innenpolitik* theories which emphasize on domestic aspects of foreign policy formulation and neorealism which emphasizes on domination of international system (Rose 1998). Therefore, what distinguish neoclassical realism from the other strands of realism is that neoclassical realism underlines the importance of material capability, but it also underlines the primacy of international system in shaping foreign policy. Further, neoclassical realism acknowledges that the impact of material capability towards foreign policy is complex and indirect. This is caused by the presence of intervening variable. In this case, the intervening variable is a smaller unit known as decision-makers or the perception of elites (Rose 1998). Therefore, it can be concluded that neoclassical realism does believe in the importance of material capabilities or power of a state which affects a state's position in international system and also elite perception in foreign policy formulation. Further, Lobell (2009) stated that the reason why neoclassical realism is important in the study of foreign policy formulation is because it indicates a transition from understanding that foreign policy formulation is only influenced only by domestic factor or international system.

Elite perception or otherwise known as decision-makers is understood as an important feature in the formulation of foreign policy. According to Novotny (2010), perception is defined as a concept which describes construction of reality by individual or individuals that are involved directly in the process of foreign policy formulation. Elite perception can be constructed through two main processes, namely the process of projection and process of transformation. The process of projection begins when there is an attempt to project the reality in international politics by the elites. The process of transformation begins when elites begin to transform it to perception. Novotny (2010) argued that there are five dimensions that affect the transformation process. These five factors are structural, geopolitical, historical, socio-cultural, and economic. Firstly, structural dimension talks about a state's bureaucratic system in which the formulation of foreign policy is conducted. In this dimension, factors such as political system, elite consensus, and public opinion may or may not be taken into account in formulation policy. Secondly, geographical dimension that is identical with theory of geographical proximity. This dimension affects how elites in one country perceive other countries based on their geographic closeness. Thirdly, historical dimension which emphasizes on the elites' experience on dealing with certain issues which inevitably shapes their perceptions. Fourthly, socio-cultural dimension which deals with the influence of ethnic groups, cultures, and religion on the foreign policy formulation. Lastly, economic dimension which deals with whether the issue of economy is central for the elite in a certain country (Novotny 2010).

In international relations, intensive and frequent interactions between countries contribute to the formation of coherent international system (Kusumawardhana 2017). In turn, every dynamic that occurs in the interactions between countries is bound to influence the international system. In relation with the formulation of foreign policy, international system surely affects which foreign policy option is the most suitable for a country. However, as argued by scholars of neoclassical realism, the relation between international system is not direct. This is caused by an intervening variable, which is elite perception and interpretation. the elite as the decisionmakers have to perceive both the obstacles and opportunities provided in the international system to formulate foreign policy which serves their interest. In other words, international system acts as a foundation of foreign policy formulation that

has to be taken into account by the elite. Every dynamic that happens within the system will affect a country's foreign policy formulation. Therefore, it is important for the elite to understand the system and also its own capability to formulate a foreign policy that suits its interest.

In order to determine the effect of international system towards the elite perception and foreign policy, Breuning (2007) stated that the first step is to establish a country's position in international system through its material capability such as size, resource, the ability to manage its resources, number of populations, military power, and economic size. This will determine whether a country is considered as a small, middle, regional, or great power (Hudson 2013). the next step is to evaluate its leadership which is done by the elites. In this step, the elites have to conduct certain assessment towards the capabilities of other countries and compare it to their own to determine constraints and opportunities for them. Lastly, the elites have to perceive the dynamics of the current international system. This determines whether the system provides opportunities or threats, and what kind of foreign policy should be formulated to advance its interests amidst a certain international system (Breuning 2007).

Syrian Civil War: Kazakhstan's Elite Perception

Since the Syrian Civil War broke up in 2011, Kazakhstan's position has remained fairly clear. The elites of Kazakhstan, particularly Nursultan Nazarbayev, has always opposed the usage of military means by external parties to end the Syrian Civil War. This commitment is evident in two occasions. The first was Kazakhstan's open refusal to Russia's request to send military troops in Syria through Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) in 2017 (Ramani 2017). The second occasion was when Kazakhstan's delegation to the UN, Kairat Umarov, openly expressed its disagreement with the usage of military means to end the conflict. Umarov expressed his disagreement at UNSC briefing about the air strikes conducted by USA, France, UK, and their coalition against Syria. Kazakhstan firmly believes that combatting violence with another violence is never the answer to resolve a conflict (Kazakhstan Mission to UN 2018). Further, Kairat Umarov stated that "...Kazakhstan's position has always been, and continues to be, that military action is the last resort to be applied only in situations approved by the security council....". This indicates that Kazakhstan strongly opposes the use of military action to resolve Syrian Conflict.

Further, Kazakhstan also opposes any forms of regime change. This view is shared by the elites of Kazakhstan who believe that any forms of regime change, imposed by external parties, is going to cause further destabilization of Syria. However, during the UNSC meeting on Syrian conflict, Kairat Umarov mentioned that any regime change is possible only if it is conducted freely and fairly by the Syrian population and not by external parties (The Astana Times 2018). He also stated that Kazakhstan has made a strong commitment to preserve Syria's independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity. Kazakhstan favors internal political settlement, which includes the reconciliation of opposition and pro- government groups and acting as a moderator between the international community and Syria to resolve the crisis (Voloshin 2017). Further, citing Nazarbayev's manifesto, Umarov further argued that the Syrian Civil War is unable to be resolved through military means but rather a peaceful dialogue and constructive negotiations (Kazakhstan Mission to UN 2018). Therefore, Kazakhstan chooses to remain neutral, a position that diverges with Russia and the USA.

As explained in the aforementioned paragraphs, elite perceptions are formed by five main factors. These five factors are structural, geopolitical, historical, socio-cultural, and economic. From these factors, only geopolitical, historical, and socio-cultural will be taken into account. Geopolitical factor deals with the problem of geographical proximity. This factor plays an important part in explaining Kazakhstan's willingness to engage actively in Syrian Civil War through constructive dialogues even though Kazakhstan does not have

anything crucial at stake in Syria. Kazakhstan has had an experience with terrorism in Afghanistan, and it was in their best interest to prevent the same thing from happening in Syria. This is evident from Nazarbayev's statement on 21st of January 2017, a few days before the Astana Peace Process commenced. Nazarbayev stated that Kazakhstan is determined to ensure peace and stability in the Middle East, particularly in the case of Syrian Civil War because of the geographical proximity of the mentioned region (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2017).

The second most important factor is history. Kazakhstan's elite perception about preserving Syria's sovereignty and not intervene its domestic affairs is heavily influenced by its history. Kazakhstan's history was determined by conflict of interests between the Turks and the Mongols. After the Turks were defeated by the Mongols, they ruled Kazakhstan until 14th century (Library of Congress 2006). During the Mongol rule, Kazakhstan was divided into three groups, namely Great Horde, Middle Horde, and Lesser Horde. Great Horde was forced to accept Russia protection to protect itself from the Kalmyk invaders. In the eighteenth century, Kazakhstan was under Russia control. Under the Soviet rule, Kazakhstan suffered considerably because the Soviet eliminated the traditional Kazakh way of life in which one third of the population and most livelihood perished. Kazakhstan was also forced to accept Soviet's large-scale projects such as agriculture projects (Virgin Lands), large-scale ethnic Russians migration, and labor camps (Library of Congress 2006). This is where the distrust against Russia starts to take form. After Kazakhstan became an independent country, it was anxious of its shared border with Russia. In fact, Kazakhstan did not possess a border agreement with Russia, not until 2005 which was 14 years after its independence. Kazakhstan's history is filled with intervention from outside parties against its will, and therefore it is logical for Kazakhstan to not want any other countries experiencing the same.

The third factor that needs to be taken into account is the socio-cultural factor. This encompasses ethnic groups, religious groups, and culture that affect the elite perception. In terms of Kazakhstan's elite perception regarding the Syrian Civil War, it is argued that the elite does have an interest in preventing Islamic extremism. According to Beissembayev (2015), Kazakhstan has had trouble with homegrown Islamic terrorism after 2003. In 2011 until 2012, fourteen terrorist attacks occurred in different parts of Kazakhstan. In 2015 alone, there were more than 500 Kazakhs imprisoned for engaging in terrorism-related activities. Kazakhstan is currently struggling with the growing radicalization which is related to the returning Kazakh fighters from Syria. According to Bilisbekov, National Security Committee, there were 125 Kazakh fighters returning to Kazakhstan from Syria in which 57 of them had been captured but the rest are still free (Eurasianet 2018). Therefore, Kazakhstan has an interest in preventing terrorism which is connected with the conflict in Syria. These factors influence Kazakhstan's Syria foreign policy, in which it chooses to stay neutral and encourage a political and constructive dialogue with the conflicting parties.

Kazakhstan's Response: The Changing Dynamics of International System

The international system arguably experiences some important changes after the Annexation of Crimea. Annexation of Crimea is chosen as the main changing point because the impact in Central Asia and Post-Soviet space is indisputable. The Crimean Annexation marked one important event in which the Cold War style polarization was once again brought to the international system. Although the polarization was not ideological by any means, the competition between the West and Russia highlighted the long-term differences of interest and ongoing competition between the two pillars. Further, the annexation also highlighted the conflict about spheres of influence like what Europe had experienced in the 19th century (Ferguson and Hast 2018). However, Russia's move was widely perceived as threatening, unfriendly, and Russia did not respect Ukraine's sovereignty by the international community. This was evident during the 68th UNGA session in which 100 countries supported Resolution 68/262 and only 11 countries were against the resolution, further reaffirming Ukraine's territorial integrity and that Ukraine's referendum was invalid (UN

2014). Russia's decision to annex Crimean Peninsula provoked uneasiness, fear, and uncertainty regarding Russia's geopolitical ambitions to establish its diminishing sphere of influence in Eurasia (Satke and Galdini 2014).

For countries in Central Asia, especially Kazakhstan, Russia's decision to annex Crimea brought uncertainty and put Kazakhstan in a very difficult situation. On one hand, Kazakhstan was aware that the referendum was the free expression of the people as demonstrated by its official statement. On the other hand, Russia's annexation was understood as an illegal move because it violated international norms which emphasized on sovereignty and equality. If Kazakhstan chose the former, it would have to risk its relationship with the West. However, if Kazakhstan chose the latter, Kazakhstan would be risking its close relationship with Russia which was Kazakhstan's long-time ally and one of its most important partners in trade although its primacy has been replaced by China in recent years. Kazakhstan has always wanted to keep a good relationship between Russia and the West, because they ensure Kazakhstan's economic and political stability. Furthermore, relying on Russia is not in Kazakhstan's best interest, particularly because of its multi-vector foreign policy since its independence.

However, it was clear that Kazakhstan clearly tries to distance itself from Russia especially after Russia began to receive economic sanctions from the West that brought a negative impact for Kazakhstan. Michel (2014) argued that the sanctions have had negative impacts on Kazakhstan's economy performance. Cheaper Russian goods that made Kazakh good uncompetitive, Kazakhstan's inevitable devaluation and its 19 percent drop in the early 2014, and the decreasing number of trade turnover between Kazakhstan and Russia made the prospects of economic relations between two countries very grim (Michel 2014). In 2015, Kazakhstan signed a new agreement titled Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (EPCA) with the EU. EPCA replaced the previous Partnership and Cooperation Agreement which was ratified in 1999 (EEAS 2017). Kazakhstan is the only country in Central Asia to do so. Further, this agreement also advocates mutual trade and investment to bolster economic links and ties between EU and Kazakhstan (Delegation of European Union to Kazakhstan 2016). Further, Kazakhstan is making moves to be economically closer to China which is evident through Nazarbayev's decision to link its infrastructure projects under the name Bright Path with China's One Belt One Road (OBOR) projects.

Syrian Civil War: Kazakhstan's Elite Perception and the International System

Kazakhstan's decision is also determined by its own national capabilities. Although Kazakhstan is the biggest and most economically powerful state in Central Asia, it still ranks below Russia and EU. Kazakhstan's limited capabilities collide with the ongoing dynamic of international system that is filled with conflicts. During the 12th Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) in 2018, Nazarbayev stated that the current international system is filled with conflicts in different parts of the world which created a tense atmosphere in the international politics (Minister of Foreign Affairs 2018). Nazarbayev also highlighted the current conflict in Eastern Ukraine and Syria which would undeniably bring economic and political consequences if these conflicts are not addressed properly. Further, these conflicts also generated a tense relationship between Russia and the West with China occupying its distinct position regarding the crises.

Kazakhstan's aforementioned national capability explicitly means that Kazakhstan is not free to pursue its foreign policy due to several constraints, such as economic and military constraints. This implies that Kazakhstan is not able to project its perception according to what it actually prefers because Kazakhstan is unable to disregard the influence from great powers. With its economic and military power which still lagged behind the other entities mentioned above, it was and still is Kazakhstan's interest to play safe and walk in the middle rather than cause confrontation especially with Russia and the EU. After the occurrence of Crimean Annexation, it arguably changed the dynamics of international system in Central

Asia. The relation between Russia and the West grew cold and tense with several sanctions that followed. For Kazakhstan, this was seen as a serious trouble because Kazakhstan itself was an ally of Russia and partner of the West.

The reality of international system during the Crimean Annexation influenced how the elites perceive the dynamics of international system and the current ongoing conflicts in Syria. In terms of how the elites perceive the dynamics of international system, it becomes clear to Nazarbayev that the world is once again in danger and the Cold War is back with vengeance (Kazakhstan at UN 2018). The current international system is tainted with ongoing rivalry between Russia and the West which brings negative consequences for Kazakhstan especially in its economy. Further, not only Russia's deteriorating economy, but Kazakhstan's elites perceive Russia's move in Crimea as dangerous and threatening to Kazakhstan. This eventually leads Kazakhstan to take certain precautions such as the signing economic deals with both EU and China and also visited the US with talks about enhancing cooperation in economic and military realms. These decisions serve as Kazakhstan's precautions against the looming instability and uncertainty in Russia although these are not intended to irk Russia in any means (Kumenov 2018).

However, the same pattern is repeated again in Syria Civil War. After Russia decided to intervene militarily with Syria's request, the relation between the West and Russia became strained. Kazakhstan was once again put in the middle between both pillars. Nevertheless, the trouble of Syria became even more serious for Kazakhstan because Kazakhstan was elected as a non-permanent UNSC member from 2017 until 2018. Although Kazakhstan was not a permanent member, its status as a non-permanent member served a sign of political support. Consequently, any votes casted by Kazakhstan would be understood as Kazakhstan's political stance. On April 14, 2018 Kazakhstan decided to abstain from the resolution condemning the West for their intervention in Syria. The ongoing dynamics in international system reinforced the same perspective which Kazakhstan had used during the Crimea Annexation. Further, this understanding of the international system is reinforced by Kazakhstan's elite perception of the current ongoing conflict in Syria.

Conclusion

The author concludes that Kazakhstan's decision to abstain in the resolution is influenced by its elite perception and the ongoing dynamics in international system. The elite perception is divided into two forms, mainly the elite perception towards the conflict and elite perception towards the international system. Kazakhstan's elite perception towards the Syrian Civil War stems from its history, cultural-social, and geopolitics factors. As a result of its history, Kazakhstan becomes very sensitive about issues on sovereignty. Any possible intervention by other countries is seen as a serious threat as demonstrated by Nazarbayev's response towards Russia after Annexation of Crimea. Further, Syria's geographic position is located not far from Kazakhstan. Although Syria is not as close as Afghanistan, Kazakhstan is still watching it closely due to the increase in terrorist attacks. This is intertwined with social-cultural factor in which Kazakhstan is afraid that the fighters from Syria are returning back to Kazakhstan and will radicalize its country. Therefore, Kazakhstan elite decides to not interfere with Syria's domestic affairs and would rather host international talks on achieving peace in Syria.

The next elite perception is the perception about ongoing changes in international system that is seen as mostly negative with uncertainty. The changes in international system, particularly for Kazakhstan and its neighboring countries, started in 2014 when Russia annexed Crimea. This annexation brought important changes to international system in which the tension between Russia and the West was impossible to avoid. Although Kazakhstan stated its position that was perceived as pro-Russia, it decided to abstain and walked in a thin line between Russia and the West. However, things began to change when the West gave Russia a series of economic and political sanctions. When the sanctions hit Russia's economy, Kazakhstan also felt the impact. Starting from 2014, Kazakhstan does not

see Russia as its reliable economic partner. This is demonstrated through its open refusal to Russia's proposal to transform EEU into a stronger political and economic union by citing Russia's economic instability. During this period, Kazakhstan was actively looking for trade and economic deals with other powers, namely China and the EU.

Therefore, when the US and its coalition decided to intervene militarily in Syria, Kazakhstan was once again put in the difficult position between Russia and the West. The West especially the EU is important for Kazakhstan. However, Russia is arguably more important because of their linkage in every aspect of cooperation. This is where the second elite perception plays an important part. The second elite perception perceives Kazakhstan's position in the international system in comparison with other great powers. Kazakhstan's elite perception towards its own limited national capabilities amidst the ongoing tension in the international system explained why Kazakhstan would rather play it safe and walk in a thin line between Russia and the West. Further, Kazakhstan's elite is also very persistent towards preserving Syria's sovereignty. a view that is consistently being uphold by Nazarbayev that was evident through his statement. Therefore, it was best for Kazakhstan to stay neutral and abstain during the voting process because it cannot compete with other powers involved in Syria. Further, it was in Kazakhstan's elite's interest to not intervene with other countries' affairs due to its history and would rather champion political dialogue as a way to end the ongoing war in Syria.

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