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## COLLECTIVE SECURITY TREATY ORGANIZATION AND ENERGY SECURITY POLICIES: THE 2022 KAZAKHSTAN EVENTS

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### Abstract

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The primary aim of this article is to analyse the energy security policies of the CSTO, which brings together countries of geostrategic importance in the production and transit of energy resources. The article not only seeks to highlight the synergy between military security and energy security but also to draw attention to the role of international organisations in ensuring energy security. In the study, the CSTO's initial peacekeeping mission, the 2022 intervention in Kazakhstan, is chosen as a case study, and it seeks to answer the question of what the effects of these events were. The study, based on the hypothesis that energy security will become one of the CSTO's primary fields of operation, used qualitative research method. The findings of the study indicate that following the events in Kazakhstan, the CSTO has increased its effectiveness as a security provider in the region; military strength is a key factor in achieving energy security; necessary for CSTO members should develop more active policies in the field of energy security, which is component of national and regional security; the events have also had repercussions on other energy-rich Turkic States and have given rise to concerns about Russia's growing influence in the area.

**Keywords:** Collective Security Treaty Organization, Kazakhstan, Energy Security, Military Security.

**Jel Codes:** Q3, Q4, Q19, H8.



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## **1. Introduction**

The concept of security, a subject of debate since the dawn of humanity, has been continually transforming in its perception. With the Industrial Revolution and the process of globalization, the concept of security has expanded and deepened. Especially from the beginning of the twentieth century, with countries in need of energy lacking energy resources and their production-consumption patterns becoming dependent on these resources, “energy security” has emerged as one of the fundamental topics of discussion in international relations. In the new era, numerous regional and global conflicts have arisen and continue to occur due to energy resources. One of the regions with energy-related security issues is Eurasia, and Kazakhstan is a significant part of this region.

Kazakhstan, holding significant potential in terms of energy reserves, has become a regional power of growing importance from a geopolitical, geo-economic, and geostrategic perspective, especially since the acceleration of industrialization in the 20th century and the subsequent increase in the consumption of non-renewable energy resources. Kazakhstan, a party to numerous regional and global international organisations, has been participating in international politics as an independent state since 1991, striving to enhance its influence politically and economically. One of these organisations is the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), a military alliance initiative of which Kazakhstan is one of the six founding states.

Focusing primarily on three objectives – political unity, combating drug trafficking, and terrorism – the CSTO was established under the leadership of Russia as a result of the unease felt about NATO's eastward expansion. To date, within the CSTO, 43 international agreements and 173 resolutions have been adopted concerning the most fundamental issues of intergovernmental cooperation in the field of collective security, and more than 30 exercises across various dimensions, along with one military operation, have been organised to form and demonstrate the strength and capabilities of the collective security system. The organisation, expected to assume a more active structure due to the conditions of its establishment period, conducted its first military operation only in January 2022. With this operation, an international organisation formed outside of Western countries following the dissolution of the USSR dispatched military forces for the first time to a member state. The CSTO's role as a security provider in the region following the incidents in Kazakhstan has been a significant development. Another notable aspect of the operation is that it was a response related to energy security a subject not directly addressed in the organisation's founding purposes and the swift

suppression of the incidents due to its security structuring. In this context, this study, which highlights the significance of military security in ensuring energy security, has selected the 2022 Kazakhstan events as a case study in line with the goal of examining the CSTO's energy security policies. The analysis, based on energy security, has sought to answer the question of what the impacts of these events have been.

The distinct feature that sets this study apart is the absence of prior research on how the CSTO, as a security organisation, has addressed the significant regional issue of energy security, coupled with the lack of a detailed analysis of the 2022 Kazakhstan events within the context of energy security. During the research process, data gathered from primary and secondary sources have been compiled and processed using qualitative research methods. This approach has aimed to generate rational outcomes from the findings obtained in the study.

## **2. Kazakhstan's Energy Resources from a Geopolitical and Geostrategic Perspective**

Kazakhstan, a significant country in the Eurasian region, shares its borders with China to the east, Russia to the west and north, and Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan to the south. It is a nation characterized by a multi-ethnic and multi-religious societal structure, vast territories, and rich natural resources. With a population of 18.51 million and a total area of 2.724.900 km<sup>2</sup>, Kazakhstan ranks second in size among the post-Soviet countries after Russia and ninth in the World (T.C. Dışişleri Bakanlığı, 2023; Ağır & Sayın, 2019: 21-23).

Gaining independence on December 16, 1991, Kazakhstan is a democratic, secular, and unitary state governed by a strong presidential system. It continues to play an active role in regional organisations such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the Commonwealth of Independent States, and the Eurasian Economic Union, as well as in international organisations including the United Nations, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, following a multi-vector strategy in its foreign policy.

**Table 1***Kazakhstan Energy Resources*

	<b>Coal</b>	<b>Oil</b>	<b>Natural Gas</b>	<b>Uranium</b>
<b>Reserve Amount</b>	25.605 million tonnes	30.0 thousand million barrels	93.7 trillion cubic feet (tcf)	906.800 tonnes
<b>Production Amount</b>	3.105 quadrillion btu	4.135 quadrillion btu	1.022 quadrillion btu	24.575 tonnes
<b>Consumption Amount</b>	2.078 btu	0.582 btu	0.609 btu	-
<b>Supply Amount</b>	37.516 thousand tons of oil equivalent (ktoe)	18.880 ktoe	18.619 ktoe	-

Source: BP, 2020; EIA, 2012; EIA, 2017; EIA, 2018

According to Table 1, the country that stands out in the global system due to its rich natural resources has a total coal reserve of 25.605 million tonnes, with a production amount of 3.105 quadrillion btu, a consumption amount of 2.078 btu, and a supply amount of 37.516 ktoe. In terms of oil resources, the total reserve is 30.0 thousand million barrels, with a production amount of 4.135 quadrillion btu, a consumption amount of 0.582 btu, and a supply amount of 37.516 ktoe. As for natural gas resources, the country with a total reserve of 93.7 tcf has a production amount of 1.022 quadrillion btu, a consumption amount of 0.609 btu, and a supply amount of 18.619 ktoe. In addition to fossil energy sources, the country is also quite rich in uranium, with a total uranium reserve amount of 906.800 tonnes, while the production amount is 24.575 tonnes<sup>1</sup>. Kazakhstan, which holds the third-largest proven coal reserves among the post-Soviet countries after Russia and Ukraine, is second to Russia in crude oil and fourth in natural gas reserves following Russia, Turkmenistan, and Azerbaijan. In terms of uranium reserves, it ranks first among these countries and second in the world. By virtue of these specified hydrocarbon resources, Kazakhstan is an important supply country capable of competing in many areas on the world market. Kazakhstan ranks third after Russia and Ukraine for coal supply among the post-Soviet states, fourth in natural gas after Russia, Uzbekistan, and

<sup>1</sup> This quantity, corresponding to 39% of the world's total uranium production, places Kazakhstan at the forefront globally in terms of uranium production. Similarly, the country ranks second in the world in terms of reserve quantity, following Australia.

Turkmenistan, and second in oil following Russia. The considerable expanse of its geography, along with its energy resources and assertive stance in global politics, elevates Kazakhstan to the status of a significant nation.

Due to its geopolitical position, Kazakhstan is also a crucial transit country. Apart from its resources, it facilitates the westward and eastward market access of numerous other resources. The most significant of the transported resources are natural gas and oil, and the country has many pipelines, some of which date back to the USSR period, while others were constructed after its dissolution. These include the Central Asia-Center Gas Pipeline System (CAC), the Kazakhstan-China Pipeline, the Caspian Pipeline Consortium (CPC), Uzen-Atyrau-Samara, the Turkmenistan-China Gas Pipeline (Central Asia-China Pipeline), the Iran Oil Swap, the Kazakhstan Caspian Transportation System (KCTS), and the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) pipeline. The oil and natural gas pipeline density reaching Europe, Eastern, and South Asia enhances Kazakhstan's geostrategic importance. Kazakhstan emerges as a promising and significant partner for both European and Asian countries. This reality focuses the attention of both energy-supplying and energy-exporting nations on this region.

### **3. Military Security as a Component of Energy Security**

Security, as one of humanity's most fundamental concerns, is also a well-established concept within the discipline of political science (Baylis, 2012: 168). The concern for ontological security has expanded over time and acquired social and political attributes. This expansion has come as individuals have come to perceive and seek to defend aspects such as social status, wealth, and property not merely as adjuncts to their existence but as integral parts of their being. Questions like “How does a person feel secure or ought to feel secure?” or “What should be secured as a matter of priority and importance?” have shaped the direction of security concerns with social and political implications. The nature of the measures to be developed in this regard has varied according to the identified threats, and achieving security without eliminating the existing threats has become virtually impossible. This approach has also remained valid in the matter of energy resources; any threat, actual or potential, against energy resources has negatively impacted states' national security. For this reason, according to Bahgat (2011: 9), energy security, especially in the post-Cold War era, has emerged as one of the primary interests in international politics. Energy security is generally defined as the access of a population in a given region to competitively and affordably priced energy services of sufficient quality that are environmentally acceptable (Jansen, 2009: 7).

The transformation of energy into a security issue has been influenced by changes in energy policies and the solidification of securitization around energy (Buzan et al., 1998: 21-49). Accordingly, any threat to energy resources has been aligned with national interests, and military power, a manifestation of national strength, has been deemed essential in securing energy resources. It has been perceived as implausible for states lacking military strength to conduct their own defense or to defend, protect, and acquire their national interests abroad. It is not feasible to counteract an attack on production security, supply security, or pipelines without military force. Therefore, according to Molchanov (2012: 12), the issue of energy security has always inherently pointed to the problem of a nation's relative power or absence. Elements that aim to weaken or eliminate this power choose energy resources as their targets. These elements may sometimes be hostile states as well as terrorist groups. Their goal is to demonstrate that their targets are vulnerable to sabotage and terrorist attacks.

Terrorists attack critical energy facilities to create problems for financial sectors, negatively influence foreign policy, and jeopardize internal stability within a country (Luft & Korin, 2009: 3), while hostile states sometimes attack energy infrastructures during wars to economically weaken the opposing side or, at times, simply to increase their share in international competition. For instance, a study of the air campaign during the Gulf War in 1991 revealed that the American armed forces went beyond bombing military targets, also targeting Iraqi energy facilities. However, a state's development of adverse strategies against another state's energy resources has never been as pronounced as that of terrorist groups. Terrorist organisations have particularly identified pipelines within energy infrastructures as targets, believing that cutting off or damaging these lines would inflict greater harm on national security.

Saudi Arabia, Algeria, Türkiye, Iraq, Libya, Colombia, Sudan, and Nigeria have all been targets of such actions. For example, in Algeria in 2013, the In Amenas Gas Facility, which accounted for 10% of the nation's natural gas production, came under attack by terrorist groups affiliated with Al-Qaeda. As a result of the assault, production at the facility, which had an annual capacity of 9 billion cubic meters, was halted, and 40 workers were killed. Following the incident, operations at the site were suspended, and companies like BP and Statoil withdrew their investments (Gücüyener, 2014). John Robb, a former ground combat agent and counterterrorism expert, has asserted that terrorists have learned to strategically wage war against nation-states without weapons of mass destruction by adopting a new method of system disruption (Sovacool, 2011: 79).

Consequently, protecting energy facilities from such attacks has become a crucial factor in energy security. These attacks not only cause supply disruptions but also damage the image of the energy-producing countries and can lead to a halt in production by energy investors, as was the case with the Amenas incident. Therefore, it has become essential to protect both the production and transfer sites of these resources with military forces and, when necessary, to create a security zone through cooperation with other states. The importance of international organisations established for security purposes has been recognised, with the expectation that such structures could either enable quicker action to mitigate the extent of damage in the face of a potential security issue or completely eliminate the threat before it materializes into an actual offense.

#### **4. Collective Security Treaty Organization and Energy Security**

The end of the Cold War at the beginning of the 1990s, alongside the dissolution of the Soviet Union, also led to the disappearance of what was one of the world's most powerful armed forces, the Soviet military. During the Soviet era, the defense infrastructure was historically distributed across all the Union republics as a coherent whole. When the union disintegrated, the military was divided as well. For example, during the USSR period, missile attack early warning systems were deployed in Belarus, the Baltic states, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, and Tajikistan; nuclear weapons were situated in Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Ukraine; and submarines and surface ships were positioned in the Baltic states, Ukraine, and Georgia. This arrangement, planned for the protection of all territories before the union's collapse, resulted in the disruption of the integrated defense system after the USSR fell apart (Kurtov, 2008: 263). The newly independent republics faced the problem of ensuring their security. In particular, Eurasian countries exposed to various threats originating from neighboring countries like Afghanistan have considered the establishment of regional security for their national interests as a priority matter.

In the new era where security became a priority, the lack of military strength experienced by all states compelled the countries in the Eurasian region to move towards military cooperation. Believing that ensuring regional security would also serve their national security interests, state leaders signed an agreement for collective security<sup>2</sup> in Tashkent on 15 May 1992. This accord, known as the Collective Security Treaty, was signed by the leaders of Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. Member states, by confirming

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<sup>2</sup> Collective security refers to joint action developed to prevent or counter any attack against an established international order (Schwarzenberger, 1951: 40).



their obligation to abstain from the use of force or the threat of force in interstate relations, have committed to settling all disputes with one another by peaceful means. The treaty text also declares the principle of non-participation in other military alliances against any party state. To promptly eliminate any arising threat, Article 4 specifies that “an attack against any member state shall be considered an attack against all members, prompting a collective response” (Collective Security Treaty, 15.05.1992). Thus, in accordance with the treaty, member states have established a joint consultation mechanism and a collective security system for addressing common problems in the region.

The treaty, initially established for a five-year period with the possibility of extension, was later joined by Azerbaijan (24 September 1993), Georgia (9 December 1993), and Belarus (4 January 1994). After ratification by the parliaments of the member countries, the treaty came into effect on 20 April 1994. By 1999, there was an intention to extend it as envisaged. However, the protocol for expanding the Collective Security Treaty, signed in 1999, was reiterated among six nations, with Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Uzbekistan<sup>3</sup> withdrawing from the treaty (CSTO, 2021a). Certain factors influenced Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Uzbekistan's decision not to rejoin the treaty at that time. One of these was the belief that the signed treaty had not achieved the expected success, particularly regarding the issue of religious radicalism in Uzbekistan. Another factor was internal turmoil within these states, such as the Nagorno-Karabakh issue. For instance, while Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan prioritized resolving their domestic problems, Georgia looked to form partnerships with organisations it perceived as stronger, such as the USA and NATO.

As a result, the protocol signed among the six member states of the CIS was designed to be open for participation by other countries in Eurasia. A legal framework and organisational structure were established for the Collective Security Treaty signed in 1992 by the year 1999, and in 2002a decision was made to grant the agreement the status of an international regional organisation. Consequently, on 7 October 2002, CSTO, a military alliance, was established by the heads of state of Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Belarus (CSTO, 2021b). Through the organisation established with the effort to create an integrated security system proposed by the Russian Federation, it has been aimed to ensure national and regional security under new geopolitical conditions more effectively. The member states have emphasized their determination to develop further and deepen cooperation in the military and

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<sup>3</sup> Uzbekistan rejoined the organisation in 2006 but withdrew in 2012.

political spheres to ensure and strengthen national, regional, and international security, as stated in the Charter of the Collective Security Treaty Organization dated 7 October 2002.

Article 2 of the treaty specifies that decisions made within the framework of the treaty provisions and international agreements are binding, while Article 3 outlines the organisation's objectives as “maintaining international peace, strengthening regional security and stability, protecting independence, and safeguarding the territorial integrity and sovereignty of member states.” In order to achieve these objectives, the organisation plans to utilise coalition (collective) forces, regional (united) army groups (forces), peacekeeping forces, integrated systems, and the bodies that manage them, along with the joint use of military infrastructure. The member states have also declared that they will interact in the areas of “military and technical (military and economic) cooperation, supplying the armed forces, law enforcement bodies, and special services with the necessary weapons, military and special equipment, and special means” (Charter of The Collective Security Treaty Organization, 07.10.2002: articles 2, 3, 7).

In this charter, “the activities of the organisation are defined as combating international terrorism and extremism, illicit trafficking of narcotics and psychotropic substances, nuclear weapons, organised international crime, illegal migration, and other threats that may arise against the security of the member states.” Although the treaty does not directly mention energy security, an institutional structure has been established to coordinate the parties for the purpose of fulfilling the stated functions (Charter of The Collective Security Treaty Organization, 07.10.2002).

The organisation, which has Russian as its official language, operates through the following bodies: the Collective Security Council, the Council of Foreign Ministers, the Council of Defense Ministers, the Committee of Secretaries of Security Councils, the Permanent Council, the Organization Secretariat, the Joint Staff, and the Parliamentary Assembly. To enable more effective institutional operations, member states have also established auxiliary bodies and working groups in addition to these organs. The existing ancillary institutions created on a permanent or temporary basis to address the challenges faced by the CSTO include: the Coordination Council of the Heads of Competent Authorities on Combating Illicit Drug Trafficking, the Coordination Council of the Heads of Competent Authorities for Emergency Situations, the Interstate Commission for Military Economic Cooperation, the Afghanistan Working Group, and the Working Group on Information Policy and Information Security. Members of the organisation continue their work through specified

sub-bodies, particularly in areas of political, military, contemporary security challenges and threats, drug trafficking, emergency response, illegal migration and human trafficking, and information security. To date, within the CSTO framework, 43 international treaties and 173 decisions have been made on the most fundamental issues of intergovernmental cooperation in collective security, and more than 30 exercises in various dimensions, as well as one military operation, have been organised to develop the strength and tools of the collective security system (CSTO, 2021b).

Within the decisions made and the sub-structures established, there is no designated working group or signed treaty directly tasked with the security of non-renewable energy resources. In all the activities carried out, it is apparent that the organisation is fundamentally focused on three objectives: political cohesion, combating drug trafficking, and terrorism. An examination of the meetings conducted within the framework of the organisation's institutional arrangements confirms this assertion, revealing that the issue of energy security is not discussed to the anticipated extent. The organisation, conceived as a military alliance, is notably deficient in the realm of energy, which is a critical factor in the region's development. When considering the decisions made and the activities carried out within the organisation, it is understood that a strategy has been adopted whereby the successes achieved in combating terrorism are expected to influence energy security as well positively. Within the organisation, it is anticipated that strengthening military capacity will resolve all issues faced by member states, with energy security being considered one of these areas.

The Deputy General Secretary of the CSTO Parliamentary Assembly, Pospelov (2019), highlighted that in the event of a potential threat during the transfer or production of energy, established military units could prevent sabotage or reduce damage to a minimal level through prompt response. He underscored the significance of the CSTO as a major alliance initiative in the region, drawing attention to the organisation's role in ensuring regional security. As Pospelov also pointed out, the convergence of regional countries through regional organisations and international institutions, rather than through bilateral relations alone, brings with it numerous advantages. The CSTO plays a crucial role in maintaining stability in the former Soviet states and ensures that the member countries of the union abstain from the use of force in their mutual relations and international engagements. Moreover, these countries, occupied with completing their institutional developments, are taking on the responsibility of being a security guarantor against external threats. Indeed, the CSTO, established on the initiative of

the Russian Federation to create an integrated security system, maintains its presence as the sole security organisation in the region, which is of significant importance.

In the process of establishing a regional security system, Russia, endeavouring to assume the role of coordinator within the organisation, is focused on developing various forms of cooperation with Eurasian countries under the CSTO framework. While Russia's policies aimed at enhancing regional cooperation within the organisation are welcomed, its adoption of a national interest-focused *modus operandi* is subject to criticism. The underlying motive of Russia's efforts to strengthen the CSTO and transform the organisation into a military bloc is to re-legitimize the influence it lost following the Cold War. Perceiving NATO's eastward expansion as a serious threat, the Russian Federation is endeavoring to maintain its influence over its immediate vicinity by establishing military bases and units in regional countries through the CSTO. The principle of “non-alignment with any other military alliance against any party state,” enshrined in the treaty signed in Tashkent, is a key strategy developed by Russia to prevent membership in other security organisations within the region. The CSTO, established under this principle immediately after the dissolution of the Union, is a regional security organisation specifically developed in response to post-Soviet countries' needs at the time, particularly as a counter to NATO.

Through the CSTO, Russia is not only attempting to prevent NATO from expanding in a way that could threaten it but is also striving to keep Eurasian countries within its sovereignty and control. However, Russia's policy has not yet achieved the intended level, and the CSTO has not captured the anticipated success. The primary reason for this is the differing interests among the member states. The diversity of interests among the members impedes the CSTO's transformation into a cohesive structure composed of interlinked countries. For the organisation to reach a more successful level, all member states must perceive the CSTO as a crucial assurance of their national and regional security and take more serious steps towards this end. The organisation should expand its areas of activity and particularly concentrate on issues of significant importance such as energy security. Despite being the first military-political bloc established in the Eurasian region, the CSTO is insufficient in resolving the common problems faced in the area. Indeed, until 2022, the organisation conducted no military operation except for small-scale exercises. The first military operation organised within the organisation's framework took place in January 2022. Given that the operation was related to energy security, it is deemed necessary to conduct research on the reasons and details of the operation.

## **5. The CSTO's First Military Operation: The 2022 Kazakhstan Events and Their Impacts**

On the 1st of January 2022, in Kazakhstan, a member of the CSTO, the doubling of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) prices from 60 to 120 Tenge sparked protests in the city of Zhanaozen, where oil processing facilities are located. When the government failed to respond to the protesters' demands, the actions swiftly transformed into broad public movements, spreading to other provinces. Following public demand on the 4th of January, it was announced that the price of LPG in the Mangistau region would be reduced to 50 Tenge and that other socio-economic needs would be separately assessed. On the 5th of January, it was announced that President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev had dismissed the government. Tokayev attributed the occurrence of the protests to the government, specifically the Ministry of Energy, as well as KazMunayGas and KazTransGas, stating that these entities were responsible for the unfounded increase in gas prices. Subsequently, numerous individuals, including the Manager of the Gas Processing Plant in Mangistau, were detained. Following statements and detentions aimed at restoring stability in the country, it was anticipated that the protests would subside, but this expectation was not met. The demonstrations escalated into uprisings and attacks on government buildings.

The transformation of demonstrations into aggressive acts in Kazakhstan is not solely due to the sharp increase in gas prices. Multiple factors are causing social unrest, including significant income disparities among social groups, economic hardships, insufficient democratic gains, poor functioning of the legal system, a corruption issue tied to the mafia and nomenklatura relationships, and low social security levels for the poor (Bilefsky, 2022). These issues, combined with the high fuel cost in the energy-rich country, have turned the protests into a widespread public movement, increasing expectations from the government. Although it was presumed that reducing fuel prices would resolve the problem, protesters began attacking critical areas such as airports and government buildings. The escalation of actions targeting government buildings led to the attackers being labeled as terrorist groups and the declaration of a state of emergency in the country.

Despite initially accepting a few of the protesters' demands, the protests did not cease, and economic, social, and political grievances intensified. The protesters demolished a statue of the country's first president, Nazarbayev, and slogans such as 'Old Man Out' demanded his definitive departure from Kazakh politics (Sputnik, 2022; Hopkins, 2022). The reason for Nazarbayev's protestation stems from his ongoing role in Kazakh politics. Having resigned

from the presidency in 2019, Nazarbayev appointed Tokayev, a loyal figure, as his successor. In other words, Nazarbayev, though officially retired, effectively retained power by positioning the manageable Tokayev in office. Nazarbayev continued to preside over the Security Council of Kazakhstan and maintained control over the country by appointing allies to key positions in the state's institutions.

Regarded as Nazarbayev's successor, Tokayev had promised economic and political reforms upon taking office, yet by 2022, Tokayev's administration had failed to fulfill these promises. Consequently, Nazarbayev's ongoing influence in Kazakh politics became another grievance aired during the protests. While the protests continued, there were reports that Nazarbayev had left the country; however, his Press Advisor Aydos Ukibay stated that Nazarbayev was in Nur-Sultan and supporting President Tokayev. Nazarbayev transferred the chairmanship of the Security Council to President Tokayev. Tokayev, internally discontented with being Nazarbayev's successor, seized the opportunity presented by the protests to initiate a significant overhaul of the existing order (Anadolu Agency, 2022). The withdrawal of Nazarbayev and his team from key positions in the country's governance proved favorable for Tokayev, yet the driving protests compelled Tokayev to get support.

To quell the unrest, conduct anti-terrorism operations, and restore public order, the President of Kazakhstan, Tokayev, requested military assistance from the CSTO. Unable to subdue the protests with his own security forces, Tokayev labeled the protesters as "terrorist groups trained abroad." The underlying reason for this characterisation was Tokayev's desire to legitimise the CSTO's intervention in the events. Subsequently, Tokayev's request was met, and on the 6th of January, the member states of the CSTO responded by declaring that "due to the threat to the national security and sovereignty of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the aggression against the CSTO coming from outside, in accordance with Article 4 of the Collective Security Treaty, it has been decided to send the CSTO's Collective Peacekeeping Forces to Kazakhstan for a limited period to stabilize and normalize the situation" (Pashinyan, 2022; İzvestiya, 2022). The main duties of the CSTO's Collective Peacekeeping Force, which includes units from the armed forces of Armenia, Belarus, Kyrgyzstan, the Russian Federation, and Tajikistan, have been specified as "protecting significant state and military facilities and assisting the law enforcement forces of Kazakhstan in stabilizing the situation and restoring it to the legal framework" (Zaynetdinov, 2011).

On January 7th, a contingent of 2,500 peacekeepers from the multinational forces of the CSTO member states began to be deployed in Kazakhstan with the objective of halting actors

who posed a real threat to the country's security, stability, and even territorial integrity (Kriener & Brassat, 2023: 272). At this time, President Tokayev declared that the security and protection of the personnel and properties of foreign companies and investors would be ensured. By the end of January 9th, the deployment of the Collective Peacekeeping Forces within the territory of Kazakhstan was completed. It was reported that by January 12th, the Peacekeeping Forces had cleared all administrative buildings of terrorists, and it was announced that the CSTO forces would begin withdrawing from the country on January 13th, with the withdrawal to be completed within ten days. On January 15th, the peacekeeping operation in the Republic of Kazakhstan concluded, and public order was re-established. The intervention put an end to the protesters' aspiration for societal and governmental reform.

With this operation, CSTO's first peacekeeping mission, the organisation's suitability, and effectiveness as an authorized political-military entity were recognised. The events in Kazakhstan have marked a turning point in the organisation's development, now gaining new characteristics as a strong international institution. The CSTO's rapid decision to deploy a peacekeeping force in response to the events has increased its significance. It has become clear that the CSTO is a mechanism working to maintain the stability and security of its member states as an authorized political-military organisation. The strategic location of the Mangistau region, where the disturbances began, and the relation of the events to energy security have also been factors that influenced the swift decision-making. The region, situated in the southwest of the country, possesses much of Kazakhstan's Caspian Sea coast and is also neighboring the energy-rich Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. The potential for similar issues to manifest in other Eurasian countries and the possibility of them affecting neighboring states have brought to mind the likelihood of a regional spread. Therefore, the events in Kazakhstan have been of significant concern to other energy-rich post-Soviet Turkic States.

In the events unfolding in Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan emphasized that the protests could not solely be attributed to rising natural gas prices, suggesting they were actions planned by external forces (Aliyev, 2022). Turkmenistan expressed a deep interest in the quick normalization of the situation, pointing out the damage to Kazakhstan (Azadlyk Radiosy, 2022), while Russia labeled the protests as an organised conspiracy, stating the demonstrators consisted of "radical and terrorist groups." The cause was attributed to internal income inequality and the suggestion that the events were orchestrated by external powers (İzvestiya, 2022). Uzbekistan associated the demonstrations with the political climate within the country (İlhan, 2022: 35). The reactions to the protests have been notably followed with concern, particularly by the Turkic States.

Moreover, the incidents have not only affected the stance of Turkic States but have also drawn the attention of other states, whether members of the organisation, non-members, or those with interests in the region, sparking discussions. The debates have generally revolved around questions such as “What is Russia’s influence on the events?”, “Will dependency on Russia increase?”, “Is the CSTO seeking new members?”, “Are the Kazakhstan events part of the CSTO’s expansion policy?” and “What is the connection with establishing the Organization of Turkic States?”

The onset of the crisis in Kazakhstan just a few months after establishing the Organization of Turkic States on November 12, 2021, has been one of the most conspicuous developments fueling debates. Particularly, Uzbekistan—a non-member of the union—and Western states have made striking statements suggesting Russia's unease with the formation of an organisation in Eurasia outside its leadership could have been an external trigger in the events (Habardor, 2022). Another incident influencing these statements was a meeting held in December 2021 to establish permanent commercial relationships to strengthen strategic partnership dialogues between the USA and Kazakhstan. The USA, being the first country to recognise Kazakhstan’s independence following the dissolution of the USSR, has made efforts to develop close relationships that would erase the remnants of the Cold War era, which have discomfited Russia. The occurrence of the events at a time when American investments in Kazakhstan’s energy sector were on the rise and closer ties were being formed has led to speculations that the protests could have been instigated by Russia (Napper, 2022).

The U.S. media has reported that in Kazakhstan, protests stoked by the rising cost of fuel have been exacerbated into a more violent and bloody condition following the intervention of the CSTO. It was also noted that led to a military incursion led by Russia, which intervention resulted in the deaths of numerous anti-government demonstrators (Bilefsky, 2022). In response to the numerous civilian casualties, Antony Blinken condemned the order given by Tokayev to “shoot to kill” and called for its retraction. Tokayev's request for military assistance from the CSTO has been deemed inappropriate, with warnings given to Tokayev that recent history shows the difficulty in removing Russian forces from the region. Consequently, the CSTO's involvement is considered tragic not only because of the loss of life and the disruption of peace in Kazakhstan but also due to Tokayev's calls for the deployment of so-called peacekeepers from an organisation dominated by Russia.

In a statement from Washington, it has been declared, “We are closely monitoring any actions that could lead to violations of potential rights by Russian soldiers and the overtaking



of Kazakhstani institutions.” Furthermore, Tokayev's call has been criticized by Uzbekistan, noting that it could evidently create a dependency on Russia while also posing an internal security issue for Uzbekistan itself (Euronews, 2022; Niyazov, 2022; Napper, 2022). In the media of Uzbekistan, there has been coverage of the remarks by Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko at the CSTO summit, where he suggested that the insurgents responsible for the unrest in Kazakhstan also targeted Uzbekistan. Lukashenko’s cautionary statement that Uzbekistan should learn from the events in Kazakhstan has sparked public debate, suggesting external pressure for Uzbekistan to join the CSTO (Shokirjonov, 2022).

Amid these debates, Kazakhstan and especially Russia have suggested that the United States and its allies might be responsible for the unrest. The 2022 Kazakhstan events have been cited as the third uprising against a Kremlin-aligned state, following the protests in Ukraine in 2014 and Belarus in 2020. It has been proposed that the chaos, occurring at a time when Russia is attempting to assert its economic and geopolitical power, could endanger Russia’s dominance in the region (Bilefsky, 2022). Tokayev's description of the demonstrators as “terrorist groups trained abroad” and the democratic aspirations of the protesters hint at the belief that external powers are orchestrating the events.

Consequently, the reversion of fuel prices back to 50 Tenge in Kazakhstan, following public demand, has had a dual effect: on one hand, it could potentially encourage the populace to rebel against any future price increases; on the other hand, it has demonstrated that any new protest could be swiftly quelled through the intervention of the CSTO. Thus, several assessments can be made in the aftermath of the events in Kazakhstan. These include the observation that high fuel prices in energy-rich countries can lead to public discontent and protest; the CSTO's increased effectiveness as a regional security provider could potentially attract more members; Russia's power and favor in the region against Western forces seem to be growing; the successful suppression of the events has increased post-Soviet states' confidence in the CSTO; the seriousness of energy issues has been recognised, and energy companies and governments are likely to act more cautiously; the understanding of public unrest due to income inequality caused by corruption issues has improved, and the dominant position of oligarchs may lead to new protests, prompting a more cautious response in anticipation of this possibility. Therefore, the incidents that have led to both positive and negative outcomes have impacted the regional countries, with Tokayev and Russia emerging as the beneficiaries of the events.

During the crisis, Tokayev managed to significantly escape the shadow of Nazarbayev in Kazakh politics, thus strengthening his image as a leader. The withdrawal of Nazarbayev from the dual-headed leadership that he once shared with Tokayev has resulted in a victory for the latter. However, the events have also increased Tokayev's reliance on Russia, a development which is evident through the CSTO's, led by Russia, principal role in suppressing the events in Kazakhstan, suggesting that Tokayev's administration will follow pro-Russian policies in foreign affairs. Russia has seized the opportunity to remind others of its power and has demonstrated that the CSTO is not just an organisation on paper but is capable of swift action when necessary, especially countering the criticism of ineffectiveness in recent years. On the other hand, another effect of the events has been related to energy security. During the assaults, both the production and transit security of energy, as well as its consumption security, were significantly threatened. Tokayev has frequently emphasised the protection of foreign companies and critical infrastructure within the country. The important role of military security in energy security has been recognised once again, and the events have been suppressed successfully without becoming multi-dimensional. The Kazakhstan events have shown that in resolving security issues in the region, it is of great importance for the military personnel in the army to be trained under common programs and for the army to be equipped with compatible arms, equipment, and communication systems. This is because the member states have the potential to face more serious issues. Therefore, considering the other problems in the region, the development of law enforcement forces of CSTO members is almost a necessity.

## **6. Conclusion**

Since gaining independence after the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, Kazakhstan has been a significant state in international politics due to its geographical location and abundant energy resources. Not only is Kazakhstan an energy-producing country, but it also plays a vital role as a key transit nation. According to the country's most recently published data, the total proven coal reserves stand at 25.605 million tonnes, oil reserves at 30.0 thousand million barrels, and natural gas reserves at 93.7 tcf. Besides its fossil fuel resources, Kazakhstan also boasts substantial uranium reserves, amounting to 906.800 tonnes, making it a significant supply country. However, the wealth of resources that Kazakhstan possesses also brings with it certain security challenges. The security issues experienced by this country, whose economy relies heavily on energy resources, significantly impact the nation.

Aware that issues in areas such as energy cannot be resolved in isolation, Kazakhstan is of the view that regionalisation efforts could provide solutions to its problems and is thus

seeking various avenues of cooperation. Since 1991, within the framework of bilateral and multilateral agreements signed, Kazakhstan has participated in numerous cooperative projects and is a member of organisations such as the CSTO. The CSTO, formed in the wake of the USSR's dissolution to address security challenges in post-Soviet states, is an alliance akin to NATO. However, when comparing the two security organisations, it is evident that while NATO has expanded the functional and geographic scope of its activities, which include energy security, the CSTO has remained more limited. The CSTO, established with the goal of ensuring regional security, has not achieved the anticipated success in energy security, which necessitates coordinated action within political and economic relationships. The belief has emerged that members of the CSTO, facing significant challenges in the production and transit of energy resources—a matter of great importance—must prompt the CSTO to develop policies in this sphere.

At the end of 2021, the CSTO intervened in the internal unrest in Kazakhstan, succeeding in bringing the situation under control and ensuring the security of energy facilities. However, beyond this intervention, the alliance had no concrete work related to energy security. On the other hand, the events in Kazakhstan in January 2022 represent a substantial development in the realm of energy security and are significant in understanding the collective security stance of CSTO member countries. The CSTO has demonstrated its potential in practice through its quick, resolute, and effective actions. This operation, the organisation's first peacekeeping mission, has clarified the CSTO's suitability and effectiveness as a political-military organisation. Despite the lack of attention to energy security issues, contrary to expectations from the decisions and activities undertaken by the organisation, it has been observed that the CSTO possesses the potential to address such issues.

The participation of troops from all member countries in the operation is evidence of the CSTO capability to conduct active operational activities. The successful and rapid suppression of the events within a short period of five days has brought to the forefront the idea that the CSTO needs to evolve into a more integrated and dynamic security organisation. Expectations from the organisation have increased, and declarations have been made about the necessity of quickly establishing a security system in the region through the CSTO. This is especially pertinent given that the CSTO, which was founded to create a cohesive security system in Eurasia, is, it must be emphasised, the sole security organisation in the region. Since it is not possible to neutralize an attack on production security, supply security, or pipelines without military power, it is imperative to perceive the expansion of the CSTO's energy policies as a necessity. CSTO members, whose economic development is significantly dependent on energy

resources, need to develop more active policies in energy security, which is a component of national and regional safety. The success demonstrated in the face of the events in Kazakhstan lays the groundwork for a preliminary assessment that energy security will become one of the organisation's primary focus areas.

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