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It's Not Easy Going Green: Kazakhstan's Transition to a Green Economy

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It's Not Easy Going Green:
Kazakhstan's Transition to a Green Economy

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the Honors Requirements
for the Department of International Studies

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INTRODUCTION/METHODOLOGY

Since Kazakhstan became an independent nation in 1991, its economy has grown enormously thanks to its oil and natural gas resources. Simultaneously, its government espouses a number of commitments and policies related to environmental protections and sustainability. In 2012, President Nursultan A. Nazarbayev announced that the country would implement green economic policies through its Strategy 2050 development plan. These policies were inspired by the United Nations Environmental Programme's (UNEP) Global Green New Deal, which securitized the concept of the green economy in the wake of the 2008 global financial crisis.

This paper argues that Kazakhstan's transition to the United Nations' (UN) model of a green economy is instrumental rather than intrinsic—and, as a result, destined for failure in the face of new security threats. Despite depictions of the new green economy policies as rooted in ancient ties to the “eternal land” of Kazakhstan, a land damaged by numerous environmental abuses during the Soviet era and in recent years, the government perceives little short-term rationale in a shift away from fossil fuel extraction (Nazarbayev, 2014, p. 12). A strong traditional energy sector is seen as the basis of economic health, a significant element of Kazakhstan's national security. When faced with fresh external threats such as Russian aggression towards other former Soviet republics, the government focuses exclusively on national security, rather than incorporating human and ecological security into a long-term plan for the future.

Kazakhstan bases its national security on both profits from natural resource exports and favorable perceptions in the international community, which it earns by acquiescing to norms. Greenness, which for the purpose of this paper will be defined as a desire to limit

pollution, recognize and mitigate the effects of climate change, reduce dependence on fossil fuels, and pursue sustainable development, is one such norm gaining ground on the world stage.

A combination of commercial and institutional liberalism, and a constructivist's focus on norms, motivate Kazakhstan's actions in search of its broadened security goals.

Commercial and institutional liberalist perspectives state that nations can attain security by building relationships with businesses, institutions, and ultimately other countries around the globe, thereby promoting cooperation over competition. Constructivists would create those ties by adapting similar norms—for example, democracy or environmentalism. Although determining Nazarbayev's personal philosophies exceeds the grasp of this paper, Kazakhstan is using a supposed transition towards green economic policies to attract investment from the private sector and intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) and legitimize itself as a successful, relatively powerful nation-state. This paper will evaluate how those commercial, institutional, and normative ties play out in Kazakhstan and whether they are sufficient to establish Kazakhstan's green economy.

Sources include speeches by President Nazarbayev; Kazakhstani government documents; reports by intergovernmental organizations such as the UN and World Bank; international and Kazakhstani news sites; and various scholarly articles focused on social, environmental, economic, and political conditions within Kazakhstan and throughout Central Asia. This research concentrates on Kazakhstan's energy security issues, defined by the World Economic Forum as “an umbrella term that covers many concerns linking energy, economic growth and political power [...] geopolitics and market structures,” and their interactions with the green economy (qtd. in Stucki & Sojamo, 2012, p. 401).

The paper will first outline Kazakhstan's history; the effects of its oil industry on national, human, and ecological security; and environmental policies before the 2007-2008 financial crises. It will then describe the UNEP's Global Green New Deal and show how the document influenced Kazakhstan. Particular attention will be devoted to the country's Strategy 2050 and concept documents on the transition to a green economy published in 2012-2013. A case study on Kazakhstan's emissions trading system will show how those policies are implemented. Finally, the effect of recent changes in global oil prices and growing regional tensions on the green economic policies will provide a basis for some policy recommendations.

Although some scholars have written analyses of Kazakhstan's recent policy initiatives and others have deconstructed the UN's green economic program, the two have not been considered together, and the instrumental nature of the policies in Kazakhstan is only beginning to be discussed. It is my hope that this paper, by presenting Kazakhstan's green economic policies as a financial and political maneuver, will inform other investigations of what will be a global trend in economic policies given the changing natural and geopolitical environments in which all countries now operate.

COUNTRY OVERVIEW

Kazakhstan did not exist as a formally defined entity until several years into the Soviet period. For much of the nineteenth century, it was a de facto colony of the Russian Empire; its capital during the Soviet era began life as a Russian military outpost in a region populated by nomadic tribes. Following the Bolshevik revolution and a bloody civil war during 1918-1921, the Soviet authorities divided Central Asia's approximately 1.5 million square miles into several republics. Only in 1936, after surviving an immense famine, did the

Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic (KSSR) become a full republic, equivalent to Russia.

World War II sparked rapid industrialization and heavy mineral extraction as production centers were relocated away from the Western Front. In the 1950s, Khrushchev launched the Virgin Lands campaign to cultivate vast swaths of the countryside, making the KSSR a major agricultural producer.

The KSSR's popular image as a land of fields and collective farms is ironic when considered alongside present-day Kazakhstan's environmental concerns, such as the desertification that resulted from overfarming. Diverting rivers to irrigate crops, a costly endeavor in this arid region, shrunk the Aral Sea by up to 80%, destroying ecosystems and livelihoods. Moscow opened a nuclear test site at Semipalatinsk in the northeastern KSSR, with no mechanisms in place to manage the radioactive pollution. In the period of *glasnost*' or openness during the Gorbachev reforms, the social movement that arose to protest Semipalatinsk indicated that Soviet Kazakh society was not frozen but in fact capable of ending nuclear tests through its attention to environmental and human security issues. Both the rapidity with which the KSSR's natural environment was irrevocably harmed and the early popularity of environmentalism there are linked to the region's history as a colony (Oslund, 2011, p. 2).

Yet the KSSR's leaders were none too eager for the Soviet Union's dissolution; it was the last republic to leave the Union, becoming independent only on 16 December 1991. Integration with economies across the Soviet Union had transformed Central Asia from steppe to center of production and extraction: Russian oil was sent to Kazakhstani plants for processing, while local crops were exported across Eurasia. Leaders such as Nazarbayev, who became president in 1989 and retains that position today, wanted to maintain their stable

power. Nazarbayev's word is effectively law, sometimes causing policymakers to lose sight of medium- and long-term goals when his rhetoric changes (Pomfret, 2013, p. 9). Though formally a presidential republic, Kazakhstan could become "just another authoritarian regime that squandered the advantages bestowed on it by abundant natural resources" if its powerful presidency does not pursue reforms ("Kazakhstan: Waiting for Change," 2013; "Kazakhstan Government Type").

The country is recognized for its stability in comparison with other Central Asian states, where unrest, economic issues, and totalitarianism pose greater threats. Although popular sources describe Central Asia as "a mess of historical cultural influences, tribal and clan loyalties, and religious fervor," Kazakhstan has successfully managed the complexities of a multi-ethnic, multilingual country (Wikipedia, 2014). Ethnic Kazakhs now constitute over 60% of the population; Kazakh is the state tongue, while Russian is an official language and still widely spoken, especially in the north. Christianity and Islam peacefully coexist, as do a vast array of other ethnicities and religions from throughout Eurasia, in a country with an estimated population of 17 million in 2013. Cultural clashes do not threaten human or national security here. However, as a result of regime type, increasingly limited freedom of the press, and new laws that limit civil society's ability to dissent, Freedom House characterized Kazakhstan as "not free" in 2014, exemplifying a trend among members of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) ("Nations in Transit 2014," 2014).

Particularly in contrast to other members of the CIS, Kazakhstan's economy performs strongly. Its real GDP, from \$24.88 billion USD in 1991, rose to \$104.8 billion in 2007 and \$224.4 billion in 2013 for a GDP per capita of \$13,171.81 in that year. The growth rate declined with the 2007-08 economic crises, but it recovered quickly. Today, Kazakhstan has

an annual GDP growth rate higher than its neighbor to the north, the Russian Federation, which likewise bases its economy on energy exports (“GDP Growth”).



Fig. 1: Kazakhstan’s annual GDP growth rate since 1991, in comparison with that of Russia. Note the decline in GDP from 2006-2009. Chart created using the Google Public Data Explorer with data from the World Bank (Google, 2014).

Caught between the need for a favorable relationship with its chief export route Russia and the desire to engage with the oil-thirsty West and China, Kazakhstan attempts to position itself as a global crossroads through its “multi-vector” foreign policy that seeks to “balance the country’s ‘diverse range of interests and [maintain] a sensible equilibrium’” among its allies (Jasina, 2014, p. 1). For example, Kazakhstan partners with NATO and even chaired the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) in 2010, but has also joined the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) with Russia and China, and will be part of Russia’s Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) come January 2015. Economic influence and soft power based on international norms are Kazakhstan’s key ways to achieve foreign policy goals. Economic concerns drive foreign policy and even domestic politics—

the leadership has called democratization a process that will only occur once a strong economic foundation exists (Utegenova, 2011, p. 142-143).

OIL IN KAZAKHSTAN

Oil and natural gas are at the heart of the Kazakhstani economy. With the government prioritizing strong economic foundations following independence, negotiations with Western oil companies commenced immediately. The American company Chevron had been discussing a partnership with Soviet authorities to develop the Tengiz oil field on the shores of the Caspian Sea. The Soviet Union's collapse temporarily delayed those plans, but in April 1993, a consortium of American, Kazakhstani, and Russian companies began operations at Tengiz.

Today, Chevron has the largest share of any foreign company in Kazakhstan's 30 million barrels of proven reserves, owning 50% of Tengiz and 20% of the second-biggest field, Karaganchak. As of June 2012, Tengiz was producing up to 520,000 barrels per day, with output expected to rise to a peak of 844,000 barrels/day in 2020. In 2013, the country produced 1.64 million barrels of oil per day on average and exported nearly 85% ("Kazakhstan," 2013). Consortiums of private or state-owned domestic companies and international firms operate most oil fields.

Oil has always been a mixed blessing. Privatization of state energy companies in the mid-1990s led to "the alienation of public resources" based on "the 1990s recognition that [liberal policies, i.e. privatization] were required for IMF and World Bank financial assistance" and a difficult investment environment that forced foreign companies to take responsibility for traditional aspects of the Soviet state (Pomfret, 2010, p. 863; Pomfret, 2013, p. 10). Foreign companies were expected to provide back pay and welfare for local

workers, and to arrange for exports through Russia, which forced many companies to offer Russian oil and gas monopolies a share in their projects. The energy-based approach to domestic nationbuilding cemented the extractive industries' role in the country's national security. Those industries also affect human and ecological security in Kazakhstan.



Fig. 2: Map showing oil pipelines (solid red lines) in Central Asia. Most pipelines go to Russia. The Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan route crosses the Caspian Sea from Aktau, the site of the Tengiz oil field, in western Kazakhstan. Oil enters China at Druzhba on Kazakhstan's eastern border. The other non-Russian pipeline reaches Turkmenistan via Uzbekistan (Energy Information Administration, 2012).

Kazakhstan's landlocked position heightens the national security concerns associated with the necessity of maintaining export routes and pipelines. Traditionally, the country exported its oil and gas to Russia because local refineries lacked the capacity to process oil. The first joint international export route was commissioned in 2001: the Caspian Pipeline Consortium, which counts Russian, Kazakhstani, and American members among its largest investors, sends oil from Tengiz to the Russian Black Sea port of Novorossiysk—an uncontroversial project focused on updating worn-out Soviet infrastructure. Other pipelines

have strained Kazakhstan's foreign policy. A route that exports oil to northwest China, a country expanding its sphere of influence into Central Asia, opened in 2006. In 2008, Kazakhstan began utilizing the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline to bypass Russia via the Caspian Sea and South Caucasus.

Oil wealth can threaten human security. Kazakhstan suffers from the "Dutch disease" of an economy overly reliant upon its profits from extracting and exporting natural resources. An oil-driven economy spells unemployment and poverty in the majority of areas not proximate to an oil field. Meanwhile, social stratification and poverty flourishes even in oil-producing Mangistau Oblast', where poverty rates are above 60% (Solyanik et al., 2012, p. 9). State reliance upon exports to fill its coffers means that taxes, a critical element of a citizen's relationship with his or her government, are limited, lessening a sense of involvement among the people (Jones Luong, 2000; Scherbak, 2010). Although oil profits do allow Kazakhstan to provide welfare and healthcare for its citizens, they cause even more human security problems.

The Zhanaozen protests provide witness to the human insecurity caused by Kazakhstan's oil-based economy. In December 2011, workers at the TengizChevroil plant in Zhanaozen began protesting their poor working conditions. Police fired on the crowd and killed between 16 and 70 people, leading to questions over whether planned parliamentary elections would go through. The oil consortium's behavior, described as "fundamentally at odds with the well-being of workers and local communities," shows how the desire for wealth can perpetuate structural violence (Kovalenko, 2014). Oil workers' conditions have not improved over time; instead, "following every round of public discontent the state has increased the force and efficiency with which it has struck back," creating a cycle of

escalating tension (Kovalenko, 2014). Since the 2011 Zhanaozen protests, “raids on independent media outlets and the harassment and detention of journalists sharply increased” (“Kazakhstan: Freedom in the World 2014,” 2014).

Moreover, the closeness of ties between political elites and oil companies “disincentivizes company action” to seek a more sustainable solution (Kovalenko, 2014). As oil wealth returns to the elites, it further concentrates power and influence within Nazarbayev’s circle, fostering corruption that harms the state’s capacity to provide for its citizens and exacerbating social inequality. One report names “the destructive exploitation of natural resources; [and] the quest by officials and businessmen to possess and redistribute these resources, shifting the environmental costs onto the shoulders of ordinary taxpayers” as “one of the principal causes of poverty and the growth of social tensions in the country” (Solyanik et al., 2012, p. 2).

Finally, oil poses a threat to ecological security, the “dynamic equilibrium between humans and nature, humans and other species, and humans and pathogens, as well as among human societies” (Pirages 2011, p. 2). Pirages’s writings emphasize that changes in humanity’s relationship with nature can cause much more far-reaching problems than military conflict. The human relationship with nature in Kazakhstan has been altered significantly by the extractive economy that places political goals and material wealth above environmental equilibrium. Furthermore, because the oil industry uses up water resources and emits vast amounts of pollution through practices such as gas flaring, it damages relationships outside the human-nature category. The desiccation of the Aral Sea due to lack of water has killed off species and harmed ecosystems. Allocating water to extraction

heightens the potential for regional conflict over water resources, harming intersocietal relationships in Central Asia.

ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY PRE-CRISES

These threats to national, human, and ecological security were sometimes addressed through Kazakhstan's pre-crisis policies on environmental issues and sustainable development. Ultimately, however, those policies show a shift away from environmental consciousness towards an oil-based, growth-oriented model, followed by a minimal acceptance of sustainable development practices in keeping with international norms, while continuing to prioritize oil wealth.

Reflecting its history of environmental abuses at the hands of the Soviet government, Kazakhstan included "the human right to a favorable environment" in its first independent constitution (Solyanik and Crude Accountability, 2012, p. 3). Already in 1995, when the second constitution was adapted, that right had quietly disappeared. It is impossible to say what caused the change but worth noting that, between 1991 and 1995, the Tengiz oil field opened for business. In the ensuing years, mass privatization institutionalized corruption and an oil-centric autocracy (Pomfret, 2010, p. 872-873). During this time dominant intergovernmental organizations promoted development in Central Asia funded by the extractive, oil-based economy: for example, the World Bank's Petroleum Technical Assistance project supported building Kazakhstan's oil and natural gas industries (World Bank, 1994).

The Asian economic crisis of 1997 and the Russian ruble devaluation of 1998 dealt a double blow to the Kazakhstani economy. Protests and strikes swept the country; meanwhile, local workers in oil-producing regions were indiscriminately laid off as multinational firms

brought in their own workers, one of the first harmful effects of globalization and the fossil fuel industry in tandem (Ostrowski, 2010, p. 85). Oil wealth was doing more harm than good to society—and “Kazakhstan had lost its image of a reformist economy in rapid transition from central planning” (Pomfret, 2013, p. 4).

Then, “at the nadir of the transitional recession [in 1997], President Nazarbayev set out his vision of Kazakhstan’s future to 2030” in the 2030 Development Strategy, which predicated achieving national priorities upon oil profits (Pomfret, 2013, p. 0). With his 2030 Strategy as the roadmap for Kazakhstani development, Nazarbayev established a course set on increasing resource nationalism (Pomfret, 2013, p. 8). In his address, he said, “the wealth of the entrails of the earth is the property of all subsequent generations,” rhetoric typically associated with a more environmentalist point of view, but extracting oil is “the very ‘key of gold’ that would enable us to open the door to welfare and independence” (Nazarbayev, “The Strategy ‘Kazakhstan 2030’”). The President’s statement plays into two conflicting relationships between humans and nature: the environment as something that belongs to all people, and as an exploitable object that exists for human benefit. That subtle conflict over norms and ideas persists to this day.

International image played an important role throughout this time: in June 1992, just under six months since independence, Kazakhstan attended the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, also known as the Rio Summit. Exemplifying a trend among several post-Soviet states, Kazakhstan attended not so much to commit to an environmentally friendly basis for utterly overhauling its economy, but to legitimize itself in the eyes of the international system, gaining recognition for its statehood and ability to sign on to commitments. In 2002, Kazakhstan attended the ten-year Rio Summit follow-up in

Johannesburg and worked together with the UNEP to publish its “Priorities for the Concept of Transition to Sustainable Development.”

In the early 2000s, Kazakhstan’s economy grew thanks to strong demand and rising prices for oil worldwide. The government began to use oil profits to implement some changes in accordance with international environmental norms. It seemed the country could progress along a relatively balanced path. Then the crisis hit, shattering both Kazakhstan’s expectations for the future and the international community’s comfortable inaction on climate change. The 2008 financial crisis led to the UNEP’s Global Green New Deal report, which sparked the idea of a green economy in Kazakhstan. Here it is time to examine whether the Global Green New Deal is truly a panacea for environmental and social issues.

THE UNITED NATIONS’ GREEN ECONOMY

In April 2009, the UNEP published a report, “Rethinking the Economic Recovery: A Global Green New Deal.” The document states that, despite the 2008 financial crisis, countries cannot neglect environmental problems; by countenancing the threats of climate change and economic collapse simultaneously, they can seize a window of opportunity to make progress in greening their economies and policies.

Unless governments incorporate policies that protect ecosystems, promote investment in clean energy, and alleviate poverty in their recovery plans, the world will soon see a repeat of 2008’s recession (UNEP, 2009, p. 5). Following a business-as-usual path, “greenhouse gas emissions will increase by 45 per cent by 2030,” tripling the previously expected temperature increase of 2°C (UNEP, 2009, p. 6). Concurrently, severe weather and increased scarcities will cause poorer countries like Kazakhstan to lose the highest proportion of a predicted 5-10% drop in global GDP (UNEP, 2009, p. 6)

The Global Green New Deal—the UNEP-proposed set of environmental, energy, financial, and institutional frameworks that would promote a green economy—presents three goals: reinvigorating the global economy while protecting vulnerable groups; minimizing “carbon dependency, ecosystem degradation, and water scarcity;” and closing in on the Millennium Development Goal of eradicating extreme poverty by 2015 (UNEP 2009, p. 6). The green economy became a focus of global discourse on the post-2008 recovery, and in 2011, the UNEP followed its policy paper with its “flagship document,” “Towards a Green Economy: Pathways to Sustainable Development and Poverty Eradication” (Faccer, Nahman, & Andouin, 2014, p. 643; Boehnert, 2013, p. 1).

While the UNEP’s documents represent admirable goals, they are neither the first nor the only articulation of the notion of the green economy. The term originally appeared in a 1988 report and, like the concept of sustainable development, has been subject to a tug-of-war among scientists, politicians, environmentalists, and businesses over its meaning (Boehnert, 2013, p. 5). Boehnert defines the original green economy as “the primacy of intrinsic value and quality in organizing economic relations, where the primary objective is the meeting of need rather than generating profit” (2013, p. 10). The UNEP’s definition of “improved human well-being and social equity, while significantly reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities [...enables] economic growth and investment” is a model where green equals growth (UNEP, 2011, p. 16).

Countries of the global South have called attention to numerous problems in the so-called new deal: for example, a growth-based understanding of the green economy still capitalizes on their natural resources, locking these countries into the same extraction-based trajectory as the global North. Countries not already rich are forced either to use extractive

industries to be able to invest in greener infrastructure, or to continue to lose trade because they are unable to meet environmental or emissions norms created by developed nations (Faccar et al., 2014, p. 643).

Other scholars criticize the UNEP's proposed program for its commodification of nature and the inherent dominance of the global North's neoliberal, growth-based ideology that they see in the green economy. Boehnert indicates two types of natural commodification: the idea of natural capital, i.e. nature as something with an economic value equivalent to that of a house or road, and payments for ecosystem services, the "reduction of ecology into services that are helpful to humans" (2013, p. 8). In contrast to a holistic approach to humanity's impact upon the natural world, the UN's concept of the green economy "promotes the expansion of [...] market-based mechanisms to manage the ecological commons" (Boehnert, 2013, p. 10).

The UN may rebut criticisms of its discourse on the green economy by pointing to its significant efforts to foster human development and security, not just growth. However, at the Rio+20 Summit in 2012, discussions returned to the question of whether it is possible to sustain current consumption and growth levels while also sustaining the environment (Brown, Cloke, Gent, Johnson, and Hill, 2014, p. 247). Many countries of the global South fear that the green economy will become "an empty rhetoric device [applied] in the developed industrial world to justify the continuity of [its own] political primacy [...] within the global capitalist political economic system," rather than a system that accounts for the threats they face (Peters & Britez, 2010, p. 18). Kazakhstan's green economic policies are situated in the middle of this debate between North and South, and Kazakhstan itself is

unsure of its own position: which path will offer it the best chances for success? Are ideas enough to maintain security in the aftermath of economic crisis?

KAZAKHSTAN GOES GREEN

It was not one but two crises that rocked Kazakhstan's assumedly stable economy: a domestic banking crisis in 2007, followed closely by the worldwide financial crisis of 2008. Unlike its Central Asian neighbors, Kazakhstan "had fuelled its rapid growth with heavy private sector external borrowings from foreign capital markets," primarily financing the country's chief export (UN, 2011, p. 14). Declining commodity prices and investments caused the GDP growth rate to plummet from 10.7% in 2006 to 8.9% in 2007, 3.3% in 2008, and 1.2% in 2009 ("GDP Growth").

According to a document from global intelligence company Stratfor published on WikiLeaks in 2012, the crises increased Russian power in a former "bastion of Western influence in Central Asia" (2013, p. 6). Since Russian banks were the only ones willing to aid Kazakhstan, which had high levels of external debt, Moscow gained a hold on its former colony. Ties with China also increased through a \$10 billion loan for Kazakhstan's extractive industries (Stratfor, 2013, p. 5). Heightened ties with those two global powers, as well as a need for even more investment, dictated a renewal of ties with the West according to Kazakhstan's multi-vector foreign policy. The country's leadership would do so by transitioning towards a new identity as a green economy. Actual initiatives, as this paper outlines, would soon reveal the transition to serve economic and political, not environmental, goals.

Kazakhstan ratified the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change's (UNFCCC) Kyoto Protocol in 2009. The country's decision to set an emission cut target of 15% from

1992 levels would actually lead to an increase from 2005 levels, as early 1990s numbers reflect the incredibly inefficient Soviet economy, not a petrostate chugging along (Boden, Marland & Andres, 2011). The 2009 Law in Support of Renewable Energy reflects the country's desire to profit from one of the protocol's economic benefits: the ability to sell unused emission permits ("Kazakhstan Ratifies Kyoto Protocol," 2009). Yet with the United States still failing to ratify the Kyoto Protocol, Kazakhstan's 2009 gesture was perceived with more favor than it may have deserved.

Before diversifying the energy portfolio, Nazarbayev ensured continued state control over oil revenues. A reorganization of ministries produced the Ministry of Oil and Gas and the Ministry for Industry and New Technologies, which oversees mining. Eliminating the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources allowed the government to "play a more central role in the oil and gas sector," even as state company KazMunaiGas's role was lessened to avoid perceptions of conflicts of interest ("Energy Profile of Kazakhstan," 2013). The government also reinstated an export duty that had been announced and cancelled during 2008-2009, doubling revenue to \$40/ton of oil in January 2011. Kazakhstan still needed oil to fund its transition.

Kazakhstan's first major policy gesture on the green economy came in 2011, when it announced the Green Bridge Partnership Program. This program seeks to link Central Asian countries with investment and technical know-how from their European and Asian neighbors to promote low-carbon development (Salimzhanova, Sardinas, & Yanovskaya, 2013, p. 1745). The Partnership, which has received support from organizations such as the United Nations, has held two conferences since its inception--and done little else. Yet the Kazakhstani government continues to laud its own initiative to the international community.

In the immediate post-crises period, Kazakhstan demonstrated small attempts to shift towards the green economy while simultaneously securing the oil profits upon which it continued to rely. Though policy commitments were made, they were often weak—for example, the Kyoto Protocol targets that show no real effort on the country’s part. Even in their hopeful early phases, the green policies were instrumental—driven by the need for greater private sector and IGO support—and secondary to the oil money that Kazakhstan expected would eventually fuel its post-crisis growth. Indeed, the oil sector’s growth had not only funded developments in other sectors—for example, the Ministry of Environmental Protection’s budget increased by 80% over the 2008-2012 period despite the economic crisis—but had also allowed Kazakhstan to diversify its export directions to the Caucasus and China (Abazov & Zhurtbai, 2012, p. 581). Yet the recovery did not go as well as expected: from 2011 to 2012, Kazakhstan’s GDP growth rate dropped from 7.5% to 5%. Leaders were worried; popular fears of renewed crisis combined with other concerns to produce the Zhanaozen protests. “Now we face a new task,” Nazarbayev announced in his 2012 State of the Union address. “We need to strengthen the course of our long-term development” (2012). The national strategy he introduced that night, Strategy 2050, signaled a radical move in the transition towards the UNEP’s green economy, with all the accompanying debates on how to balance growth and greenness.

STRATEGY 2050

The official goal of Strategy 2050 is neither to position Kazakhstan as the epitome of the green economy, nor to use oil profits to fund climate change mitigation efforts. Nazarbayev’s new benchmark is simple: he wants Kazakhstan to become one of the top 30 developed countries (standards exemplified by the member nations of the Organization for

Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD] member nations) by 2050—that is, copying a list of norms rather than determining what suits this country best (Nazarbayev, 2012). That vision will be met

“in terms of a wider range of social, environmental and institutional achievements: a highly educated, gainfully employed, healthy and secure population; *an efficient, sustainable and diversified energy sector; a green economy with clean air and water, resilient to the risks of climate change*; a balanced, efficient and decentralized urban and regional economy; a diversified modern knowledge-based economy; a country open to and integrated with its neighbors and the world; and above all an effective, inclusive, transparent and accountable economic and political institutional system” [emphasis added] (Linn, 2014 2).

Specific goals include at least a 4% annual GDP growth rate, increasing non-oil exports to up to 70% of trade, greatly reducing the energy intensiveness per GDP (Kazakhstan had the second-most energy intensive GDP in the world in 2013), growing the number of small and medium enterprises, and promoting innovation (Enerdata, 2014; Nazarbayev, 2014, 8-9). Nazarbayev also identified ten global challenges that must shape policymaking; apart from demographics, water and food security, and inequality, they include global energy security and natural resource exhaustion. At last, the speech act of securitizing these two energy-related issues has occurred—but will it be carried out in policy?

Notable is how these challenges are framed. Rather than stating the necessity of switching to alternative and renewable fuel sources in light of climate change, one learns that “all developed countries are increasingly investing” in these greener technologies and understands that, to become properly developed in the eyes of others, Kazakhstan must follow suit. Although it is acknowledged that fossil fuels are being exhausted, “our country will not depart from its policy of reliable strategic partnerships and mutually beneficial

international cooperation in the energy sector,” i.e. alliances with oil giants that also shore up the political elite, furthering inequality as well as environmental problems (Nazarbayev, “Ten Global Challenges”). In terms of the sixth challenge, resource exhaustion, Kazakhstan’s worrisome dependence on its extractive industries is still portrayed as an advantage that will give it greater global power in the years to come.

Such language contrasts directly with the nods to clean and/or renewable energy throughout Nazarbayev’s speeches and the Strategy 2050 website that predicate the country’s security on the green economy (“Concept for the Transition of the Republic of Kazakhstan to Green Economy,” 2013, p. 3). For example, in the Energy section of the website, two articles from spring 2014 discuss implementation of hydropower plants in the eastern part of the country and of a solar panel installation in progress in Astana; speeches frequently refer to clean energy and energy saving technology, although it is unclear exactly what such terms actually mean in context (“Future Economy Sectors' Development,” 2014; “Unique Project in Solar Energy to Be Realized in Astana,” 2014). Domestic media outlets provide a channel for much talk and little action, aside from news on some of Nazarbayev’s pet projects. The new policies seem more likely to allow Kazakhstan to mimic other insufficient overtures towards environmental stewardship than lead to more environmentally friendly resource use.

Before analyzing subsequent policy documents, it is worth considering that Strategy 2050 does attempt to address the social issues and inequalities endemic to the current economic model. The United Nations, in its depiction of the green economy as a tool to promote sustainable development and eradicate poverty, lists creating jobs and fighting inequality by “[protecting] vulnerable groups” as priorities equivalent to slashing carbon emissions (UNEP, 2009, p. 25). Unlike some supposedly green policies that simply focus on

making large corporations look better, Strategy 2050 and the accompanying documents place much attention on fighting the poverty and inequality through better education and small business opportunities. Secondary and tertiary education, access to healthcare, and equal access for people with disabilities are all highlighted as commensurate with economic development.

However, the extraction-based economy that actually remains in Kazakhstan, as demonstrated by documents conceptualizing the transition to the green economy, will make Strategy 2050's promises irrelevant. While a variety of official concepts and strategies make it clear that Astana espouses the notion of a green economy in order to gain attention from foreign investors and organizations, the decision to continue reliance upon and development of fossil fuels indicates that the transition is not so whole-hearted as preliminary reports imply.

WEAK CONCEPTS OF GREENNESS

The 2013 "Concept for Transition of the Republic of Kazakhstan to [a] Green Economy," written to accompany Strategy 2050, is key to understanding the country's new policies. A strong normative element runs throughout, echoing its true motivations: the green economy will not turn away from extractive industries but will "enable Kazakhstan [to] achieve the proclaimed goal of entering the top 30 developed countries" by reaching the same energy intensity and other indicators of the OECD countries ("Concept," 2013, p. 3, 6). Targets for better resource management or efficiency in terms of water use, agriculture, energy efficiency, the power sector, air pollution, and waste management are set.

The Ministry of Environmental Protection's 2012 report, "Transition of the Republic of Kazakhstan to [a] Green Economy," stated the strategic objective of transitioning "to

green development while revenue from sales of minerals provide it with this opportunity” in light of both the dramatic effects of climate change on the country and the potential of “trade barriers of an environmental character” that would “decrease the competitiveness of Kazakh production on the world market” (Bultrikov, 2012, p. 6). As is logical, the document written by officials tasked with protecting the environment focuses on the threats that Kazakhstan’s current economic model poses when combined with climate change: “[g]rowing desertification, ‘historical’ pollution, increased volumes of waste and emissions seem to be a serious threat for [the] economic development, environment and health of the nation” (Bultrikov, 2012, p. 3). Among other national security threats, temperatures in Kazakhstan are expected to rise faster than the global average, completely melting the glaciers that provide fresh water before 2050 and leading to dangerous regional water scarcity (Bultrikov, 2012, p. 5-6).

Though the report serves as one of many speech acts by a domestic authority figure (here, the Ministry of Environmental Protection) securitizing environmental issues, it does not explicitly connect the oil-based economy to climate change caused by fossil fuel pollution. Instead, the author names the coal-based domestic energy sector and related inefficiencies as the biggest problem Kazakhstan confronts today. While certainly true, such an approach diminishes the character of the transition to the green economy, casting doubts upon its supposed commitment to changing norms about environmental protection.

The Transition report then proposes natural gas as the green solution for the energy sector’s pollution. At present some of Kazakhstan’s 3.5 trillion cubic meters of proven gas reserves are reinjected at oil fields like Tengiz and Karaganchak to increase recovery; using that gas for domestic power is the report’s sole and subtle dig at the oil industry. Shale gas—

which emits greater amounts of methane than traditional natural gas and would damage relatively preserved ecosystems and waterways in eastern Kazakhstan, along with a host of other environmental and health concerns associated with its extraction—is presented as another alternative.

Extracting shale gas is incredibly water-intensive, requiring “70 to 300 times the amount of fluid” that traditional gas does, impractical in this arid part of Central Asia (Klein, 2014, p. 346). Yet Kazakhstan already uses a significant quantity of water for mining and hydrocarbon extraction (Stucki et al., 2012, p. 406). By providing an alternative form of supposedly clean energy, it de-incentivizes developments in wind and solar, while encouraging Kazakhstan to export more coal to neighbouring China (Klein, 2014, p. 144). In short, although it may destroy Kazakhstan’s attempts to mitigate the effects of climate change, shale gas is seen as an ideal alternative to oil: both “green scenarios” in the Concept document posit the gasification of several regions (“Concept,” 2013, p. 32).

The authors do acknowledge Kazakhstan’s enormous potential for renewable and alternative energy. For example, wind energy alone could produce one billion kilowatts of energy per year, “which exceeds the consumption of all fuel and power resources [...] by 25 times” (Bultrikov, 2012, p. 11). Solar power, meanwhile, is a feasible source of up to one trillion kilowatts/year that would especially help develop rural areas that lack consistent electricity. Kazakhstan expects that small-scale “mini” hydropower plants, which would have much fewer environmental consequences than immense projects à la China’s Three Gorges Dam, could similarly provide renewable energy in rural areas, increasing their economic capacity while decreasing the need for the costly and environmentally harmful process of importing resources. Finally, allowing the construction of nuclear plants—in 1997, the

country's sole plant closed in light of the Semipalatinsk movement's widely supported anti-nuclear policy—would decrease reliance on oil and gas, though one wonders how the government plans to secure popular support for that initiative. In light of these potential strengths, the “Concept for Transition of the Republic of Kazakhstan to [a] Green Economy,” approved May 2013, declares that 50% of Kazakhstan's energy in 2050 will come from alternative and renewable sources, an ambitious target—that has left many wondering if the government has the capacity to succeed.

The rhetoric of the Transition and Concept documents explicitly values economic objectives over environmental ones, showing that the norms supposedly supporting the turn towards greenness are actually quite weak. The Ministry of Environmental Protection's report explains that the green economy promotes qualitative, not quantitative GDP growth but then goes on to say that green development would lead to a 16% worldwide GDP growth rate and “enable the economic growth rate to be maintained,” presumably in the healthy 5-7% range that Kazakhstan experienced in 2011-2013 (Bultrikov, 2012, p. 17, 19). The Concept document first lists increased resource productivity as a priority, with health and environmental goals coming in third place (“Concept,” 2013, p. 8). When explaining the value of energy efficiency measures, profits and redirecting foreign investments are first named, accompanied by dollar amounts, only then followed by the non-quantified “strong environmental argument” that does not give a proposed greenhouse gas emission reduction (“Concept,” 2013, p. 24-25). The language used in these reports indicate that the green economy is a tool for achieving better economic growth; environmental benefits are an added bonus, and rather negligible at that given the focus on natural gas.

These documents simultaneously frame the green economy as a political maneuver. When analyzing motivations to act, the authors of the Transition report highlighted Kazakhstan's opportunity to set the green standard among the Commonwealth of Independent States members, "an important political act" (Bultrikov, 2012, p. 20). Such action would improve the country's image as a leader in Eurasia, a goal that plays off Kazakhstan's continued need for recognition as a player in the world's largest geopolitical space (Bultrikov, 2012, p. 21).

Both reports also rely heavily upon the international community's expectations as a motivating factor for domestic change, as well as Kazakhstan's ability to compete with South Korea and China ("Concept," 2013, p. 5). Leaders underscore hosting EXPO-2017, a significant international exhibition whose theme will be "Future Energy," as a necessity for improving international perceptions of Kazakhstan's greenness. The exhibition aims to "showcase Astana as a leader in the global revolution in advanced technology and sustainable development"—that is, to display a petrostate as the ideal of greenness (Nurzhnan, 2014).

Throughout both papers, Kazakhstan's green goals are not based on shocking new emissions targets or other indicators; instead, the country aims to copy inadequate European systems (Carbon Trade Watch, 2011). The overwhelming usage of such phrasing (e.g. "significantly behind the high-income countries and Eurozone," when Kazakhstan is not a high-income country and therefore could not be held to such standards) indicates the economic, political and image-related instrumental uses of the green economy policy (Bultrikov, 2012, p. 8). That absence of an intrinsic commitment to protecting the natural world became apparent when new regulations were introduced.

CASE STUDY: KAZAKHSTAN'S EMISSIONS TRADING SYSTEM

As a case study of Kazakhstan's green economic policies in practice, this paper takes the example of the Emissions Trading System (ETS), a cap-and-trade program that allows domestic and international businesses to trade their permitted emissions, utilizing both commercial liberalism and constructivism to create ties that would improve Kazakhstan's security. The first legislative frameworks were passed in 2010, and in 2013, the country launched the Phase I pilot period. Thus Kazakhstan has the proud position of being the first Asian country to have an economy-wide carbon emissions program; South Korea, frequently recognized for its green economic measures, plans to launch its aggressive program in 2015 ("S. Korea to Launch World's 2nd Biggest Carbon Market," 2014).

Currently, the regulations apply to 178 companies, chiefly oil and gas producers "that account for 80% of all emissions" (Khamidov, 2013). The program only measures carbon emissions, with hopes to expand to methane, as well as create carbon offsets in the near future (Environmental Defense Fund and International Emissions Trading Association, 2013, p. 2-3). Among Central Asian countries, Kazakhstan has the highest carbon dioxide emissions levels per capita, a rate that at 15.84 tons in 2007 was double that of neighboring petrostate Uzbekistan (Stucki et al., 2012, p. 410).

As with the green economy-focused strategic documents, political and image-related gains, which in turn would make investment more attractive, motivate policymakers. The "ETS is lauded by the UNDP," one of several IGOs that provide important funding for domestic social, environmental, and economic initiatives (Khamidov, 2013). Kazakhstan, hoping to foster future ties, based its own trading system on that of the European Union, and plans to balance that nod to the West by someday trading carbon offsets with Japan, Russia,

and Ukraine (Environmental Defense Fund et al., 2013, p. 5). China's first steps towards a carbon-pricing scheme, like South Korea's plans, motivate Kazakhstan to play the role of regional leader (Upston-Hooper and Swartz, 2013, p. 73). The government expects the trading scheme to prove advantageous in terms of foreign policy because it maintains the country's regional influence while attracting positive attention from every "vector."

However, the ETS's economic, environmental, and social components are missing. Domestic conglomerates such as KazEnergy and international firms alike protest the ETS on the grounds that "it would stifle economic growth and decrease Kazakh global competitiveness" (Khamidov, 2013). The national business chamber likewise demanded that the program be delayed and reorganized in order to provide a softer transition (Nabiyeva, 2014). They perceive that one of Kazakhstan's motivations in implementing the program is simply to extract more money in taxes and fines from Chevron and other companies.

Under pressure, officials who first chose 2010 as the benchmark year for limiting emissions amended it to 2013. Since output was low in the former year due to the global recession, selecting the latter represents an attempt to make the program more amenable to the energy and mining industries targeted (Khamidov, 2013). When the government re-launched the pilot phase in 2014, fewer companies were affected and fines were minimized. Kazakhstan had bowed to pressure from the "oil and energy companies [that] are not ready to compromise" and limited its ETS's effects (Nabiyeva, 2014). Combined with complaints by foreign investors—whose money is critical to implementing cleaner energy sources—of inordinately high taxes on excessive emissions, it seems that the ETS is on shaky ground (Khamidov, 2013).

Weaknesses in regulation and institutional ability accompanied the government backtracking. There are no penalties for companies that fail to comply with surrendering allowances (Environmental Defense Fund et al., 2013, p. 6). Monitoring, reporting, and verification processes are not clear, and “the independence and integrity of the verification process” demands further attention (KET 72). Leaders of domestic environmental nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) have criticized the program for its poor local implementation, implying that policymakers gladly support “one of [...] Nazarbayev’s pet projects” but fail to institutionalize changes (Khamidov, 2013). Government corruption is partly responsible for public doubts, as the population does not know how revenues will be used. Citizens and business leaders also question the ability of the Ministry of Environmental Protection to administer the program.

Emissions trading systems are also criticized by a variety of actors outside Kazakhstan: an ETS is not a real solution to environmental issues, but rather a mitigator, a way to garner approval. Not only does the business-oriented approach to environmental solutions distance social movements and ordinary people from the ability to demand better change, it also “feeds the false perception that a full transition to renewable energy is technically impossible” (Klein, 2014, p. 199). ETS frameworks fail to mitigate the increasing pollution that stems from globalized trade: because shipping emissions, for example, “are not formally attributed to any nation-state,” it is impossible to pin their effect on a single country (Klein, 2014, p. 79). When considered alongside Kazakhstan’s desire to increase the volume of its non-energy exports to up to 70% of total exports, that absence of regulation has frightening consequences. The European Union—Kazakhstan’s model for an ETS—has even encountered demands to cancel its carbon-offset program because it has “resulted in an

increase of emissions worldwide” (Klein, 2014, p. 229). Such concerns call to mind voices in the global South that wonder whether green economic policies are simply a tool of the North’s continued dominance, a way to appear to act on rhetoric without making potentially painful changes. Kazakhstan, having been harmed itself at the hands of Soviet leaders, now seems to embrace its own rhetoric without results.

Although the ETS “does promote private investment in low-carbon and renewable energy technologies,” according to some sources, Kazakhstan’s most fully realized experiment with greener policies is riddled with holes (Chadha, 2014). It perpetuates the idea of protecting nature as rooted only in financial gain and acquiescence, rather than commitment, to international norms. Its environmental protections are much more limited than at first glance. Finally, its poor implementation and insufficient monitoring signify that policymakers themselves do not take the ETS seriously. That negative outlook is true for Kazakhstan’s green economic policies as a whole.

CRISIS ON THE HORIZON?: GREEN COMMITMENTS IN 2014

Kazakhstan’s human and ecological insecurity was in the making long before the last quarter century. First the Russian Empire, then the Soviet Union disregarded the region’s environmental health to profit from its natural resources. That mindset was further embedded by aforementioned loans from the IMF and World Bank that told Kazakhstan its security and development relied upon oil profits. Today Kazakhstan continues its extractive economic model despite the clear threats to human and ecological, and therefore national, security. An intrinsic commitment to human and ecological security as a foundation of national security is not apparent in the green economic policies.

Public opinion polls indicate that perceptions of the country's ecological health remain low. The prominent Kazakhstani NGO Eko-forum asked visitors what they thought of the domestic ecological situation; 64% of respondents said it "causes specific worry" and 19% called it simply bad [author's translations] ("Shto vii dumaete ob ekologicheskoi situatsii v strane?," 2014). A similar poll found that 73% of respondents believed that the lack of information about ecological issues "does not allow me to have an idea about the condition of the surrounding environment" [author's translation] ("Udovletvoreni li vii dostupom k ekologicheskoi informatsii?," 2014). These polls were conducted in October 2014—well after the green economic policies ostensibly began.

Kazakhstan remains an oil state. Its insignificant commitments—such as the supposed emission reduction targets that would actually increase the amount of carbon pumped into the atmosphere—signify its unwillingness to abandon the economic model that made its elite prosperous. Yet that model, which leaders expect not only to provide for their own financial security but also to fund the green economic policies, is no longer reliable in light of recent events in Eurasia combined with a precipitous drop in global oil prices. Kazakhstan has a burgeoning crisis at its door.

Tensions fuelled by Russian involvement in the 2014 Ukrainian crisis spell bad news for Kazakhstan. In the past, Nazarbayev has referred to the importance of cooperating with one's neighbors in today's multipolar world, as his multi-vector foreign policy suggests ("You Can't Choose Your Neighbors: Nazarbayev about Russia and China," 2014). More recently, President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia has made references to Kazakhstan's alleged lack of an independent history. Those and other statements have gone so far as to spark fears of a repeat of the Crimean annexation in Kazakhstan's heavily Russian northern provinces

(Dolgov, 2014). Nazarbayev must now balance his need for Russian oil and gas pipelines with maintaining his country's sovereignty, both real and perceived, as well as relations with investors in the West and China.

The sanctions against the Russian energy sector that were announced in September 2014 are also harming Kazakhstan's oil industry, an unintended consequence on the part of the United States and European Union. Combined with dropping oil prices in summer 2014 that led to a worldwide 20% decline per barrel since February, Kazakhstan has already devalued its currency, revised its national budget, and decreased growth targets by one-third (Lillis, October 14, 2014; "The New Silk Road: Hardly an Oasis," 2014). Rather than undermining the extractive economy, declining oil profits will eliminate the minimum \$1 billion/year government investment for implementing the green economy and simultaneously encourage more rapid development in natural gas exports to China, southern Asia, and even ties with Iran (Lama-Sharif, Dec. 3, 2014). Meanwhile, the decline in oil prices and regional tension combines with continued lack of international confidence and perceived governance in Kazakhstan to produce a difficult investment climate (Ospanova, Jan. 2014, p. 29-30).

If the price per barrel of Brent Crude, a benchmark for the same type of light, sweet crude oil that Kazakhstan produces, goes below \$60.00, Kazakhstan will almost certainly experience zero growth in 2015. As of December 19, 2014, that number has dipped below the \$60 threshold briefly and hovers around \$61/barrel (Lillis, Oct. 2014; "Europe Brent Spot Price FOB," 2014). Though detrimental to the economy in the short run, these challenges can be viewed as an opportunity for Kazakhstan to reevaluate its approach to national security and better incorporate environmental protections, renewable energy, and more localized development into its policymaking, creating a more sustainable means of attaining security.

Some government figures do recognize the possibilities. Head of the Central Bank Kairat Kymbiletov said the challenging situation was ““kind of good news for people who want to change something”” (Farchy, 2014). In the face of fresh economic crisis, the government could direct its stimulus efforts not at natural gas but in low-carbon infrastructure and renewable energy projects that will pay off in the longer term. That approach to the green economy would mean shifting away from expectations of short-term growth and profit and towards the UN’s own definition of sustainable development: something “that meets the needs and aspirations of the present without compromising the ability to meet those of the future” (United Nations, 1987, p. 39).

Rather than reasserting his commitment to greener policies, Nazarbayev has signaled a reversal in rhetoric and, therefore, policy. At a meeting with Putin in late September 2014, the Kazakhstani leader criticized the “euphoria” over alternative energy and shale gas alike in favor of oil. These remarks indicate more than political posturing for Russian interests. Actions mirrored rhetoric in the recent (summer-autumn 2014) reorganization of the Ministries of Energy and Environmental Protection. The Ministry of Environmental Protection was closed and its functions handed over to the Ministry of Agriculture, as well as to the newly recreated Ministry of Energy, formerly the Ministry of Oil and Gas and the Ministry of Industry and New Technologies. That handover makes for apparent conflicts of interest: for example, the same department that oversees the extractive industries is now responsible for the green economic policies’ implementation—and for environmental protections. Eko-forum criticized the change, saying that it indicated the government’s de-prioritization of environmental and public health concerns (Ospanova, Oct. 2014).

Opposition leaders and international experts agree that Nazarbayev's statements, the weakness of the green economic policies, and actions such as the ministerial reorganization indicate that the idea of the green economy was rhetoric targeted at Western investors and IGOs, rather than a fundamental change in Kazakhstani policy (Sorbelli, 2014). Nazarbayev considers his green economic policies nothing more than mutable rhetoric, a "charm offensive" for garnering Western support to help Kazakhstan balance a rising Russia without being overtly confrontational (Lillis, December 10, 2014). Nazarbayev does not subscribe to the new norms of greenness, and therefore they are a non-issue. New economic policies are already painting over the greenwashing that occurred from 2009-2014.

Reflecting popular worries about Kazakhstan's national security, Nazarbayev gave his State of the Union address in mid-November 2014, months earlier than the expected winter 2015 date. He announced yet another new economic policy, the Nurly Zhol or "Bright Path" program that he hopes will prevent the anti-Russian sanctions from sparking another crisis in Kazakhstan. Nurly Zhol will direct money from the National Welfare Fund to massive infrastructure investments—projects typically "done out of vanity" with few results to show ("The New Silk Road: Hardly an Oasis," 2014). From preliminary descriptions, one may observe that Kazakhstan has not secured the quantities of foreign investment it wished for in its green economic policy documents, though it is pushing for more Western assistance (Buzephanova, 2014). One may also notice that, according to an infographic posted on the Strategy 2050 website, the only energy or environment-related investments in Nurly Zhol are intended to update old electrical wiring (Infographics: Basic Directions of New Economic Policy 'Nurly Zhol,'" 2014). Renewable and clean energy initiatives appear to have been put

to the wayside in the face of economic strife, and Kazakhstan has authorized several projects related to shale gas in Central and South Asia (Perkins, 2014).

Astana, clearly frightened for the health of the Kazakhstani economy, is returning to its traditional source of national security: fossil fuel extraction. Yet addressing the threat of economic crisis in a way that focuses on renewable energy and better energy infrastructure would improve security on all levels. Better local power grids, decreased pollution, and more job opportunities with companies that treat workers more fairly would improve human security. Decreasing the dependence upon fossil fuels would also improve ecological security, which in turn would increase Kazakhstan's ability to grow crops, use its water wisely, and even gain influence and prestige in Central Asia. Shifting the source of national income away from oil and gas—whether exported to Russia, China, or across the Caspian Sea—would improve Kazakhstan's national security because it would no longer be so reliant on the goodwill of its neighbors, nor impacted as much by Western sanctions. When combined with the improvements in human and ecological security, it is clear that shale gas is not the right choice for Kazakhstan's long-term national security, but will instead repeat the social inequality, pollution, and over-reliance upon foreign investment that characterized the oil industry.

CONCLUSION

For Kazakhstan, continued oil profits until 2014 simply perpetuated a cycle of destroying the natural environment with little regard for the long-term. When faced with economic crisis in 2007-2008, Kazakhstan began to adapt the UN's recommendation for green economic policies, but it fell victim to a combination of both internal and external politics and weaknesses in the UNEP's original plans, including the idea of mitigating

environmental damage through market-based means. Combined with an authoritarian regime that continues to suppress social movements, weak implementation of even the most basic programs, and a preference for international image over actual values, the reforms were destined to fail.

By all accounts, Kazakhstan's attempted transition did not go unnoticed, with the wealth of IGO, NGO, private sector, and mass media reports upon which this research draws indicating the attention the green economic policies received. Yet the country is so far failing in its onetime quest to go green and now contends with greater national security threats to boot. The cooperation and security promised by commercial and institutional liberalism did not fail Kazakhstan. Rather, it was a weak commitment to the environmental norms that were the root of the undertaking. Kazakhstan had the opportunity to emphasize environmentally friendly precedents in its policymaking history, but with oil-centric autocracy already too firmly institutionalized, and the promise of easy profits from natural gas on the horizon, chose not to follow through.

It is not enough to vocalize support for a norm. In order to gain legitimacy or security in international affairs, policymakers and citizens must work together to embrace that norm. Otherwise the idea will be left behind as policymaking reveals true priorities—and the country's credibility may even be damaged in the long run. Norms matter, but their motivation and implementation matters more. Without institutionalizing a more equitable and sustainable economic model, Kazakhstan will not be able to maintain its domestic stability, nor its careful balancing act among powerful countries. Without locating a strong desire within its own citizens for greener policies, and giving them a greater degree of influence

over policymaking, the high-level champions of the green economic policies will lose influence, perhaps returning at the tail of the next crisis.

This paper does not aspire to present a hopeless view of the future. Kazakhstan can change, but not by following the models used since independence. Its leaders must allow for more freedoms so that citizens can express dissatisfaction without fear and, if they so choose, demand greener policies. Any new economic programs announced in the coming years should prioritize infrastructure investments, clean energy, and diversifying the nation's economy to provide more people with a greater variety of jobs. On the world stage, Kazakhstan's role models, such as the OECD, should commit to more demanding environmental standards. Its nearby neighbors, including Russia, must recognize the detrimental effects of climate change and their role in perpetuating environmental destruction. Russia and the other CIS nations, the United States, and the European Union must also seek to reconcile the supposed cultural differences that will only hurt all parties in the long run. Finally, the organizations upon which Kazakhstan still relies for aid must make a commitment to eliminating policies that support the commodification of nature or the export of environmental burdens onto future generations. Only with these changes will Kazakhstan's "eternal land" have any hope of remaining green.

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