Fuelling the New Great Game: Kazakhstan, energy policy and the EU

Neil Collins 1 · Kristina Bekenova 2

Abstract This article looks at the “New Great Game” as the most widely used metaphor for the geopolitical dynamics of Central Asia. Its focus is on Kazakhstan and Europe with particular reference to energy policies. The European approach to Kazakhstan is conditioned by its energy security priorities with issues of democracy and human rights relegated to the margins. For Kazakhstan, the article suggests that the game is played with an eye to regime legitimacy, territorial integrity, and international recognition. Relations between Kazakhstan, China and Russia are also examined. Some of the limitations and strengths of the Great Game metaphor are analysed.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the countries of Central Asia again became the focus of attention for competing world powers: “Central Asia, for good or for ill, is back once more in the thick of the news, and looks like staying there for a long time to come” (Hopkirk 1992, p. xviii).

This renewed awareness reflects the role played by Central Asian states in the wider interaction between the major players in world politics such as America, China, Russia and the European Union (EU). For the individual states, such as Kazakhstan, the changed focus is both a constraint and an opportunity. As Cooley (Cooley 2012a) suggests:

Some commentators have referred to Washington, Moscow, and Beijing’s renewed activity in the region as a modern iteration of the Great Game. But

1 School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Nazarbayev University, 53 Kabanbay Batyr Ave, Astana 010000, Kazakhstan

2 Graduate School of Public Policy, Nazarbayev University, 53 Kabanbay Batyr Ave, Astana 010000, Kazakhstan
unlike the British and Russian empires in their era of competition and conquest, the Central Asian governments are working to use renewed external involvement to their sovereign advantage, fending off disruptive demands and reinforcing their political control at home.

This paper presents the geopolitical “game” approach to Central Asia and examines the role of Kazakhstan in that game with particular reference to its energy policy and the EU. The idea of the “New Great Game” has gained a currency and influenced much contemporary media and academic analysis. The metaphor is, therefore, examined in some detail in order to extend its value and pinpoint its limitations.

How a game is defined?

Individually, disciplines define a game in different terms. For example, some social science scholars are interested in describing the psychological and sociological functions of a game, while political science, in particular, concentrates on the different strategies of states. For anthropologists, a game, first of all, is a basic human activity and the most important feature is the interaction between the players. Indeed, for all, interaction is a key element in the definition. This article adapts Denzin’s (1975, pp. 463–464) formulation of the game as “an interactional activity of a competitive or cooperative nature involving one or more players who play by a set of rules which define the content of the game”.

The emphasis in this analysis, however, is not only on rules but also the roles the players adopt. It is acknowledged that states are not uncomplicated autonomous participants, but for the most part, this commentary on the game is state-centric.

For international relations, to use game as analogy seems very attractive and appropriate for many cases and on different levels. One of the famous uses of the analogy is by Hobbesian realist scholars. Realists, however, while accepting that the hegemony of great powers “insist that the basic rules of the game cannot be changed” (Steans et al. 2013, p.71). Here, we are less definitive. We accept that the word game can be used in many contexts and like most analogies can be ambiguous if stretched too far. As Bougher (2012, p. 147) says of “analogy’s cousin, metaphor”: “it provides frames of reference that highlight some elements of the comparison, while masking others”.

Our paper is about the game in international relations in a specific region and focuses on one particular player. It is worth noting that the usage of a game in this paper is not about formal game theories either of conflict or cooperation (Kydd 2015). We use game just as a metaphor for understanding politics, “to ascertain how far [politics] itself bears the character of play” (Huizinga 1949). First of all, uncertainty, pressure and tension are characteristic features of international politics as well of ordinary games. If we look at the nature of a game, it could be defined as any situation in which the success or failure of a player depends not only from her own action but also from the behaviour of other players. As used here, a game supposes the potential existence of the clash of interests as a required condition. The concept of the game provides opportunities for the political research and analysis of political tendencies. While framing the analysis of international relations in Central Asia using the game
analogy, we do not wish to encourage the political cynicism among readers that similar use in the media has been shown to do.

**The structure of the game**

The game analysis of the Central Asian region presented here draws in part on child psychology and consists of two parts:

- Structure
- Process (Denzin 1975, pp. 458–478)

The structural elements of the game are the roles of actors, levels, rules, spectators, and prize (see Fig. 1). Three conditions determine the arrangements of the roles between the actors engaged in the game whether:

1. The sphere of actions is familiar to the actor
2. The actor and his behaviour are the centre of activity
3. The view of the “adults” involved in the game

The familiarity with the sphere of actions means that the state/player is culturally, historically or politically attuned to the game and its wider context. The second condition presupposes that at the core of the game is interaction between players and the necessity to take into account the behaviour of other states. Following El’Konin
(1999, pp. 11–30), the role of the adults in this case is the possibility of involvement of the great powers in the game. The participation of these “great players” can significantly affect which role the local actor chooses. However, because we are considering the game as interaction between states in the international context, the role analysis should emphasise the domestic sources of the role choice as well.

The process of the game is not voluntary and spontaneous; it is influenced by the following factors:

1. Time
2. Unforeseen or accidental events
3. New objectives
4. New roles

Time makes its own amendments to the process of the game. The goals that players were eager to achieve in one particular period are different from the contemporary ones. Similarly, the whole nature of the game can be changed by unanticipated or chance events. These may themselves recast the already implemented game strategy and bring unpleasant results for one actor and create favourable circumstances for others. By the same token, each player may independently set new objectives following a reassessment of the direction the game is taking. To play a new role is a proactive decision of an actor. The decision is also determined by widening of the player’s outlook during the game process or by communication with adults (great powers) that could trigger the local state’s desire to assume a more senior role.

The game itself has rules and the players are a community. To analyse the dynamic of this game community, we should focus on four concepts:

1. Levels
2. Rules
3. Spectators
4. Prizes

The elements of the game are illustrated in the Fig. 1 (p. 32 of the given paper).

The game concept includes the analysis of the main “players”, the regional as well as non-regional actors involved in the region’s affairs, because the main feature of the game is that “it is never imposed by physical necessity or moral duty; it is never a task; it is done at leisure, during ‘free time’” (Huizinga 1949, p. 8). In other words, a state makes a decision whether to participate or not in the game, and as well as to rotate among different levels of the game structure. The character of the league depends on the powers involved in the game. No matter how well or poorly the contestant plays, the most significant element is participation, which automatically affects the whole process of the game.

The game is not a place of unconditioned actions, the players’ behaviour is constrained by the rules of the game, which “determine what ‘holds’ in the temporary world circumscribed by play” (Huizinga 1949, p. 8). But, at the same time, the main implementation of the game approach is that the rules of behaviour are integrated or built-in within the chosen role of each participant. If the player understands that rules limit his behaviour and potential, he may try to refuse the role and re-emerge as a new
player with new possibilities and rules. Highly structured games, as noted by Denzin, establish the special position of referee in order to avoid rule violation. The referee is a neutral person/authority who is responsible for enforcing the rules and maintaining fair conditions. Such an authority may also exist in international relations. It could be in the form of international law, which represents a set of rules governing the relations between states, or an arbiter to whom the players may appeal.

Another key element is spectators, who observe and evaluate the state’s role and actions in the game. In politics, the main spectators are the public or society. As soon as state is involved in the game, society as spectator has its own vision on how the state should play, and because the national audience is very important in terms of state’s legitimacy, their perceptions of a state’s behaviour are critical. The spectators’ support, or otherwise, can change the outcome of the game. The more supportive they are toward the state’s policy, the more they are satisfied with the state’s role in the game, and the more successfully the state plays the game the better. But, at the same time, the dissatisfaction of the spectators could be a huge limitation or constraint for further participation in the play. Spectators may be “home” supporters whose views are significant if state behaviour is to be justified and regime stability maintained. In order to play successfully, state should be confident that the role it chooses to play is at least able to secure its crucial domestic political legitimacy.

The prize is what exactly motivates players to be in the game. It could be stability of the regime, the decision-making by government, domination over the territory, the enlargement of the EU, or access to the natural resources. The game analogy also points to elements, such as tactics, socialisation, interaction, and venue that will be introduced in the case study below which analyses Kazakhstan’s role in the energy game in Central Asia, particularly its interaction with the EU.

Energy Resources and the “Great Game”

Central Asia was labelled as a “prize” in a Great Game between world powers by Kipling, in his novel Kim. Morrison (2014, pp. 131–132) notes the centrality of the analogy with some regret: “the history of the Russian conquest of Central Asia is… cursed with a dominant narrative that refuses to go away. Works on the so-called Great Game between Britain and Russia in Central Asia abound…."

As the dominant Western narrative has it, a succession of ambitious Tsars and ruthless generals crushed the Muslim peoples of Central Asia and occupied their lands. Britain reacted militarily to any hint of Russian “meddling” in the areas on the frontier of India. For the British, India was the prize but, as a result of the game, the whole of Central Asia was brought under Tsarist colonial administration.

If, in the nineteenth century, the Great Game was played between Britain and Russia for supremacy in Central Asia, the New Great Game starts with the collapse of the Soviet Union, when five new Central Asian republics appeared: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. As Laruelle and Peyrouse (2013, p. 7) note: “…a realistic interpretation of the interaction between Central Asian countries and external actors is therefore not of a ‘Great Game,’ but rather of many ‘little games’ that are modular, evolving, negotiable, complementary, and not exclusive of one another.”
Being new post-Soviet states and holding pro-Russian policy, the Central Asian states firstly attracted attention in terms of stable regimes and non-traditional security (terrorism, drug traffic, etc.). After the dissolution of the Soviet Union and, as consequence, the reduction of Russian influence in the region, the Caspian Sea countries with oil and gas deposits “suddenly found themselves back in the world’s headlines, a position they frequently occupied during the 19th century” (Hopkirk 2002, p. 59). The rhetoric of “great powers” has been changed, now emphasising the significance of the region primarily as suppliers of energy resources to the world market; the rivalry between them has been enhanced. In this game, the control over territory was transformed to the control of oil and gas reserves and pipeline routes. The new “multifaceted game” for the Eurasian oil began. The USA, China and the EU have joined Russia, an “old” player in Central Asian, in a new game for a new prize. As Cooley (2012b, p.8) notes, however, the game is not the sole preserve of the global players: “the Central Asian states, even the weaker ones, are not passive pawns in the strategic maneuverings of the great powers, but important actors in their own right”.

Thus, the new game is being played at a number of levels. The rules of the game are not dictated solely by the big players. The Central Asian states themselves have “drawn up the ‘local rules’ that guide many of these geopolitical interactions, learning to leverage this interest and even fuel perceptions of regional competition to guard their domestic political power and extract economic benefits” (Cooley 2012b, p. 9). Cooley isolates three “local rules” in particular:

- Regime survival is imperative.
- State resources can be leveraged for private (elite) gain.
- Patronage networks exist to secure power.

In the new circumstances of economies “heavily geared towards major international trading partners” (Laruelle and Peyrouse 2013, p. 130). Kazakhstan is the predominant Central Asian actor with its GDP approaching 60 % of the total for region as a whole. As the largest and most favoured in terms of natural resources, it has become a key player. As Khidirbekughli (2003, p. 162) puts it, “Kazakhstan has become the focal point of strategic rivalries in twenty-first century”. At the same time, its position in relation to both Russia and China also makes it among the most vulnerable. Its tactics are thus crucial to its survival as “… the only Central Asian state sharing a border with Russia, and one whose history and demography are intimately bound with that of its northern neighbour…” (Cummings, S. 2003, p. 139).

Both Russia and China have been described in the constructivist international relations literature as seeing themselves as “civilisation-states” rather than “nation states” in the Western sense. They regard themselves as above the status of other participants in the game. Reflecting on the worldview at both elite and popular level, Jacques (2009, p. 244) suggests “when the Chinese used the term quotes “China” they are not usually referring to the country or nation as much as to Chinese civilisation…”

Similarly, often reflecting the Russian Orthodox geopolitical metaphor of Russia as the “Third Rome”: “the [contemporary] Russian state shares with the Tsarist state…a deep belief in the special role in world history, which the Russians are destined to play” (Lomagin 2012, p. 509).
As Stegen and Kusznir notes (2015, p. 94), Russia, there are some clear aims in the game:

- Safeguard Russian territory from regional instabilities.
- Protect Russian national populations in the region.
- Gain greater control over the production and transport of energy.
- Limit the influence of external actors in the region, such as the USA and China.

To its neighbours, these ends may seem to be pursued by too energetic means.

The Kazakhstan regime is keen both to be seen as autonomous from and friendly towards its northern neighbour. Its response to the annexation of Crimea in 2014 and sponsored uprising in eastern Ukraine has been measured and cautious. Nevertheless, it reacted indignantly to assertions by the Russian leadership that “Kazakhs had never had statehood” before 1991 (Casey, 2015). The Government in Astana responded by asserting the longevity of the Kazakh state and ostentatiously celebrating the 550th anniversary of the Kazakh khanate. It also intensified its campaign to discourage the expression of separatist sentiment.

An important difficulty faced by Kazakhstan’s ruling elite is the question of succession. As Schatz and Maltseva (2012, p. 46) described the dilemma for “soft authoritarian” regimes, a category into which they put Kazakhstan: “if they cannot shape the political field through their discursive efforts, soft authoritarian regimes will fall—either to extra-regime proponents of regime change or to within-regime hardliners advocating the broader use of repression”.

The Kazakhstan ruling class has largely eschewed coercion in favour of persuasion in part ironically because of the perception of weakness that the use of violence may engender among important observers. It has also been able to achieve a level of performance-based legitimacy given the improvements to the material conditions of most of the country’s citizens. The elite are inclined to suggest putting “economics before politics” and to dismiss comparisons with mature democracies.

Cooley’s identification of the rule that “state resources can be leveraged for private (elite) gain” needs to be tempered when applied to Kazakhstan where “economic growth and development as a basis for strengthening the political legitimacy of the ruling elite” (Domjan and Stone 2010, p. 36). The loyalties of the Kazak elite are mediated by family, clan, ethnic and other claims that facilitated a wider distribution of economic resource benefits through processes of clientelism and, what Schatz (2005, p. 238) refers to as “clan balancing”: “Clan divisions entered modern political life in Kazakhstan not because the state was unable to transform distant peripheries…but rather because of particular legacies of the Soviet rule”.

Clearly, clan and other networks were used for patronage purposes and to secure power but, as Howie and Atakhanova’s analysis (2014, p. 79) of the 1996–2009 period demonstrates that “income and consumption inequality has significantly decreased, and the decrease in household income inequality is the most dramatic”.

The key spectators of the game for the Kazakhstan government are both internal and external. The new state has needed to establish its legitimacy among the population in its territory in much the same way as many multi-ethnic political entities emerging from either a colonial or imperial past. New symbols, political institutions and cultural narratives were created to show that Kazakhstan’s subjugation by Russia was but an
interruption in a national story stretching back for centuries. Nevertheless, the task for nation builders in Kazakhstan is far from straightforward: “[They] are attempting to achieve several incompatible goals at the same time, trying simultaneously to ethnify the state and to integrate the population on a supra-ethnic basis” (Holm-Hansen 1999, pp. 223–224).

It is still not clear that the conundrum has been or can be solved and certainly the coverage of the political game is distinctly different in the two major languages. For example, Burkhanov (2013, p. 157) notes that “both official and private Kazakh-language newspapers tend to emphasise the exclusive “Kazakhness” of the state; they consider Kazakhs as exclusive legitimate owners of the state...In contrast, Russian-language newspapers tend to talk about a “shared” notion of the state and its diverse and polyethnic character”.

The identity problem is reflected in the juxtaposition of civic and ethnic claims on loyalty. The majority Kazak ethnic group looks to language, distinct cultural practice and racial distinctiveness for definitions of identity, while the largest minority of Russians relies on a common civic culture as a basis for loyalty to the state. The official multi-ethnic policy is clearly at odds with the political reality of Kazak ethnic hegemony. The political elite may not be united on the nature of the state, but in the game, there is a presumed team unity.

The President of Kazakhstan has associated himself and his government with set targets which, while distant, are important signals of the tactics to be employed as they involve explicitly putting economic development ahead of democratic ambition:

Kazakhstan has always followed the “economy first” principle. Thanks to this, we are actively developing. Kazakhstan entered the top five of the fastest developing countries in the past decade and a half.1

The prizes for the Kazakhstan elite as a group are territorial integrity and regime survival. Individually, personal wealth and status are also significant. Cummings (2003, p. 140) suggest “Kazakhstan’s elite has engaged in attempts at external integration to divert attention from domestic problems; these problems partly stem from the country’s poorly developed state and national identities”.

Like in other new states, the government in Kazakhstan sought to join international and regional organisations for both practical and symbolic reasons. The most important other player in this regard was Russia as, in the beginning, according to Olcott (1995, p. 28) “the dominant paradox of post-communist Kazakhstan is that the state can continue to exist as a home for Kazakhs only to the degree that Russia permits it to do so”.

By demonstrating repeatedly that it was regarded as an independent player by others, Kazakhstan asserted its own legitimate, autonomous existence. It has diplomatic relations with 139 countries, diplomatic missions in 74 and accredits diplomats from 107 states. Kazakhstan is also an enthusiastic participant in a plethora of regional and international organisations. These include the WTO, the OSCE, the Shanghai

---

1“Nazarbayev Calls on Countries to Follow G-Global Principles, Maximise Economic Development”, The Astana Times, 27 May 2014. Available at http://astanatimes.com/2014/05/nazarbayev-calls-countries-follow-g-global-principles-maximise-economic-development/, accessed at 24 November, 2015.
Cooperation Organisation (SCO), the World Economic Forum in 2013 and “Expo-17”, planned for 2017 in Astana. This “multi-vector” policy, as the government refers to it, is the core tactical guidance for the nation’s game plan. As Anceschi (2014, p. 4) asserts: “a calculated opening to the world… became the most defining feature of the foreign policy of post-Soviet Kazakhstan”.

Kazakhstan is a member of the Eurasian Economic Union together with Russia, Armenia, Kyrgyzstan and Belarus. But, despite the rhetoric of integration, there are clear political boundaries to its progress. Kazakhstan does not want it to develop common political institutions of a kind that would allow Russia to establish a “privileged sphere of influence”. Similarly, Kazakhstan’s membership of the Collective Security Treaty Organisation, which promotes military cooperation, is, at least rhetorically, juxtaposed with its links to NATO. In that context, Contessi (2015, p. 30) notes that “Kazakhstan’s pursuit of co-alignment in the national security sphere is a particular manifestation of the goal of shielding its sovereignty from undue great power encroachments”.

The frequent use of the term multi-vector is meant to imply a balanced if not neutral approach using which Kazakhstan can maximise its autonomy of action and bargaining power.

As was discussed above, venue plays an important role in shaping a state’s image and in defining its role. Acting as a host to international organisations and being active within them is a potent tactic. In this respect, Kazakhstan is “atypical among Central Asian countries” (Weitz 2013) for its efforts to increase regional as well as global peace, stability and cooperation by hosting international conferences and to provide platform for the dialogue between conflicting parties. Thus, Kazakhstan emphasises its mediating role by hosting two rounds of negotiations on Iranian nuclear programme involving Iran and the P5+1 group in 2013. In 2015, it provided a neutral ground for the annual United Nations International Media Seminar on Peace in the Middle East. In further examples, Kazakhstan provided a platform for the dialogue on the Ukraine crisis as between Moscow and the West. In December 2014, Nazarbayev positioned himself as an honest broker in the conflict when he made an official visit to Ukraine. Astana sponsored “Normandy format” negotiations on the Ukrainian crisis on January 2015.

Its proactive stance in relation to Afghanistan is another example of the increasing role of Kazakhstan in the regional affairs. In December 2015, President Nazarbayev also used his annual state address to seek a reduction in tension between Russia and Turkey following the shooting down of a Russian military plane by a Turkish F-16.

On the global level, Kazakhstan provides aid to poorer states and participates in peacekeeping missions in conflict zones such as Iraq. It has also successfully sought membership of WTO and engaged with the OECD Country Programme.
Kazakhstan hosted a regional conference on countering violent extremism in June 2015. Perhaps its most trumpeted foreign policy stance is on nuclear non-proliferation.

In its own self-image, Kazakhstan shapes its political profile not only as a strong actor standing upon the principles of peace and stability but also as a state with a strong economy and as a country of peaceful coexistence of different nationalities and religions.

Kazakhstan and China

For Stegen and Kusznir (2015), there is no doubt. The title of their analysis declares: “Outcomes and strategies in the ‘New Great Game’: China and the Caspian states emerge as winners”.

In their commentary on the game, Kazakhstan is a Caspian state, together with Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan. That China is the “dark horse winner” is put down to the uncomplicated tactics, it employs with high investment and low conditionality. The other significant players have, in the view of Stegen and Kusznir, over played their hands by seeking to constrain China in global terms and obliging it to become more active in its neighbourhood. They maintain that “the behaviours of Russia, the USA, and the EU, both within the region and, in the case of the USA, further abroad, have inadvertently driven the Caspian states and China towards one another” (Stegen and Kusznir 2015, p. 92).

There is no doubt that for Kazakhstan, China is an important player but one about whom to be both cautious and cooperative. A pipeline for oil linking Kazakhstan and China was first agreed in 1997. By 2009, the initial stages established Kazakhstan’s first route for oil to bypass Russia. In 2015, a gas pipeline reached its final capacity set at 55 billion cubic meters of gas per year. Despite the greater independence these two pipelines and others afford, Russia still remains the main export route for Kazakhstan’s oil accounting for about 30%.

In terms of the multi-vector policy, the PRC offers a chance to be seen as an important facilitator of that country’s policy of “peaceful rise”.

China is already outpacing Russia, which is encountering ever more difficulties in trying to arrange a continental bloc of satellite states. While it may not be possible for China to organize its own version of such a bloc given the deep-rooted regional fears and apprehensions about Chinese objectives, in the coming years it will probably be the primary foreign economic presence in Central Asia… (Kim and Blank 2013, p. 773).

Not all the home “fans” view increased cooperation with China positively. Nevertheless, Kazakhstan’s trade across the border at Khorgos potentially could be the largest trans-shipment station in Asia. In addition, pipeline capacity is planned to increase substantially. Chinese investment in energy companies in Kazakhstan has risen significantly in recent years. The government in Kazakhstan is, however, aware of popular misgivings of the kind that found expression in demonstrations against Chinese agricultural land acquisitions in 2010.
Clarke (2014) suggests that the elite in Kazakhstan are vulnerable to the perception among the population about the government’s handling of relations with China on five main topics:

- Economic dependency
- Xinjiang and Uighur issues
- Demographic threats from China
- Water security
- Transparency in policymaking vis-à-vis the PRC

It is hard to assess the significance of public opinion on these topics in Kazakhstan, but the government has been reticent about commenting on them. Based on surveys conducting since 2012, China is progressively viewed as less unfriendly by Kazakhstani population: The percentage of people who identify China as unfriendly toward Kazakhstan was decreased from 19% in 2013 to 11% in 2015.6

Xinjiang is a vast territory, representing one sixth of the PRC’s total land area, that challenges the Chinese nationalist idea of a single China. The Uyghurs, its main ethnic minority, account for 45% of the population and have close ethnic ties to several central Asian states (Collins and Cottey 2012). Though Uyghurs are the seventh largest minority in Kazakhstan, the government has allayed these misgivings by complying with requests from the Chinese government asking it to “discourage” pro-Uyghur independence movements in its territory and to extradite activists. Its membership of SCO has facilitated Kazakhstan’s security collaboration with Beijing.

In relation to water, Kazakhstan suffers a perennial shortage and, despite signing an agreement in 2001, the issue of transboundary water management remains contentious. Similarly, the question of both legal and illegal Chinese immigration continues to be a controversial issue in Kazakhstan in part because of a poor regulatory framework.

For China, Kazakhstan represents an important component of its New Silk Road project economically and, potentially, militarily. In Kazakhstan’s propaganda, the idea of being a bridge from east to west is a consistent theme, so the symbolism of the Chinese initiative is powerful (Ambrosio and Lange 2014, p. 538).

While China is increasingly significant, the steadily growing relationship between Kazakhstan and EU has facilitated Europe becoming Kazakhstan’s major export partner with almost 46% of its total export trade. The interest in each other is determined in large part by a European desire to have access to diverse energy resources and a Kazakhstani ambition to diversify its energy routes. The interaction between Kazakhstan and the EU is an interesting case to illustrate the use of the game analogy.

Kazakhstan and Europe

Despite their distance from the playing field of Central Asia, European countries have had a long history of engagement. In relation to energy resources in particular,

---

6 Vinokurov, E. (2015, eds.) EDB Eurasian Integration Barometer, Analytical Report #33 (2015), p. 29, available at: http://www.eabr.org/general/upload/EDB_Centre_Analytical_Report_33_Full_Rus.pdf, accessed 29 November 2015
European involvement can be traced back to 1907. By the time of the establishment of the Soviet Union, Europe’s was deeply engaged in Central Asia.

The latest involvement of European countries in Central Asia can be traced to 1990s, after the collapse of the Soviet Union and formation of independent states in the region. This stage featured Kazakhstan as a newly independent player with a cautious “welcome policy” and an energy policy game reflecting its strategic relations with Russia. In this period, despite the rhetoric of sovereignty, Russia still treated Central Asia as “lying within her geopolitical space” (Edwards 2010, p. 94).

In spite of lack of diplomatic logistics, a shortage of diplomats and strong Russian influence, Kazakhstan, in new circumstances as a sovereign state, could not keep playing with the old rules. In this period of great uncertainty, Kazakhstan was ambivalent about fully defining the character of its relationship with the EU or the separate European state. In its turn, Europe also had untested ideas about the Central Asian states. Its approach was tutored by a naive wish for “a politically and economically stable and predictable space on its doorstep which observes European parliamentary standards and consists of organized and mutually cooperative states built on the EU model” (Laumulin 2000).

The inexperience in mutual interaction and the unfamiliarity with each other’s potential interests and ambitions generated a situation where the contact was developed on two levels: (1) Kazakhstan and individual European states, and (2) Kazakhstan and EU an entity.

On the inter-state level, the rules were quite simple and were determined by energy interests. Each EU member state has its own energy priorities, and these were particularly clear following the oil crisis of 1973. The decades that followed saw the “dash for gas” in the UK, a big investment in nuclear infrastructure in France and a prioritising of renewables in Germany. Some other European countries, such as Denmark, increased the use of coal. The emergence of new energy sources in Central Asia also encouraged national responses. For example, in 1993, the newly established Kazakhstan state company “KazakhstanCaspShelf” signed an international agreement with Holland (Shell), Norway (StatOil), the UK (BP) and France (Total). Relations with individual European states have subsequently broadened, but energy remains the main focus. In 2015, for example, President Nazarbayev made a state visit to the UK during which the British Prime Minister, David Cameron, announced 40 new trade deals with Kazakhstan worth £3 billion. The core transactions were for “gas plants and a steel production facility in Kazakhstan” (Putz 2015). Similarly, the Netherlands, Switzerland and France are among the largest foreign investors in Kazakhstan.

Although Europe is increasingly viewed as a single actor, individual member states also pursue their particular interests and mostly without reference to the democratisation agenda. Germany has sought to maintain closer ties with Kazakhstan than most other European member states. In part, this reflects the significance of the ethnic German population of Kazakhstan. The relationship also “developed around dense political ties and converging commercial interests” (Anceschi 2014, p. 11). Kazakhstan is Germany’s third largest oil supplier and many of its major companies operate there. Germany has used its incumbency of the rotating Presidency of the EU Council to push Kazakhstan somewhat further up the EU agenda. For example, a “Strategy for a New Partnership with Central Asia” was published at the end of the German Presidency in June 2007.
Of the member states of the European Union, it might be imagined that those in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) would be particularly to the fore impressing the democratisation agenda given that they, like the countries of Central Asia, were formally part of the Soviet Union. It is notable, for example, that Latvia used its period and the rotating presidency in 2015 to make improved relations with Central Asia as one of its declared aims. The CEE countries do draw on their own experience to promote civil society in Central Asia to a greater extent than other members. Nevertheless, there is very little to choose between the approaches of the CEE and those of “older” members of the EU (Berti et al. 2015).

In the early 1990s, the EU had very weak ties with any of the new Central Asian states. As Anceschi (2014, p. 6) puts it with reference to Kazakhstan: “EU policies…, for the greater part of the 1990s, [were] poorly articulated and clumsily implemented as the European Union struggled to formulate a coherent vision of its international role in the early post-Cold War era”.

It was 1994 before an EU delegation opened in Kazakhstan, but it also served Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. The EU dealt with all the Central Asian states in a generic way seeking to reinforce democracy and help the transition to the market economy. The European nations were also concerned about security issues arising from neighbouring Afghanistan (Baran et al. 2006). Since then, the EU has developed a more informed common strategy on Central Asia, published in 2007, while simultaneously structuring bilateral relations in Partnership and Cooperation Agreements (PCA). The primary playing field for the EU is not, however, Central Asia as a whole but rather the Caspian states with their oil and gas resources are so necessary for maintaining European energy security. The unreliability of Russia as a stable and trustworthy partner pushed the EU to expand its links with its neighbours, especially concerning energy security.

Analysis of alternatives to Russian routes indicates that the southern gas corridor (includes Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan) is exactly the project which “will certainly contribute to the EU’s diversification efforts” (Chyong et al. 2015). Of course, it is highly competitive and challenging game for EU with such mature players as China and Russia. But, it is in Kazakhstan’s interest to involve EU as real player in the region. As Kourmanova (2015, p. 7) suggests “in Kazakhstan, the EU is increasingly perceived as a single actor in foreign policy, but this perception is still incipient: member states still have varying approaches and priorities…”

The rules from an EU perspective are:

1. Support of democratic institutions
2. Develop the energy sector
3. Encourage of economic reforms

The dialogue between the EU and Kazakhstan on democratic institutions is conditioned by very different perceptions of state building. The elite in Kazakhstan are keenly aware of the political instability experienced by Kyrgyzstan and elsewhere. It is argued that building a political system with a strong presidency and traditional forms of public consultation is more appropriate than European liberal democratic institutions. The new state needs to have a post-Soviet interlude before attempting multi-party democracy. Similarly, issues of human rights and press freedom must be seen in the context of the necessity for stability and inter-ethnic harmony. European responses are
tempered by the wish not to push non-trade related disagreements too far. Reviewing the impact of the PCA, Anceschi (2014, p. 2) suggests that EU policy as practiced “failed to replace pragmatism as the dominant force…post-2007 EU policies do not differ significantly from those pursued…before the launch of the strategy”.

The emphasis has been on encouraging non-state actors and municipalities as well as facilitating judicial reform. In particular, the EU is careful not to endanger its energy strategies by being too assertive in its democratic agenda. As Bossuyt and Kubicek (2015, p. 182) suggest compared to its policies in Kyrgyzstan: “in Kazakhstan, the EU only promotes some elements of broad liberal democracy, n particular, puts less emphasis on political rights and horizontal accountability…it places more emphasis on state administrative capacity and less on socio-economic development…”

The most interesting part of the energy game between Kazakhstan and EU started in the new millennia, when Kazakhstan began to play a more significant and focussed role as a regional and potentially global player. In 2010, Kazakhstan suggested a new document “Energy Charter: Kazakhstan-EU, 2020” which would regulate energy cooperation only between Kazakhstan and EU. The interest in the document, which in the end exists only as an idea, indicated Kazakhstan’s desire to:

- Diversify its energy routes
- Cease its dependence from Russia and the high transit tax rates
- Join the Southern gas corridor project, an initiative of the European Commission for the gas supply from Caspian and Middle Eastern regions to Europe

The EU has a partnership agreement with Central Asia as a whole that covers cooperation on the management of water resources and certain trade arrangements. For Kazakhstan, significant trade arrangements are in place for both steel and textiles. An enhanced PCA between the EU and Kazakhstan, which had been in negotiation for some time, was initialled in January 2015. The core game, however, remains focussed on energy. The European Commission under Jean-Claude Juncker since November 2014 now includes the newly created post of the Vice President for the Energy Union as well as the Commissioner for Energy and Climate change. Energy policy has been identified as a Commission priority, and while many aspects of energy policy remain at the national level, the EU as a body will continue to become more assertive. As Mantel (2015, p. 71) suggests:

…the EU and Kazakhstan have complementary interests for a mutually beneficial cooperation in the energy sector. Kazakhstan is eager to involve international partners in the development of its energy sector and…the diversification of its pipeline routes…to the European markets…the EU-Kazakh cooperation [should be] viewed in the light of a “New Great Game”… in which several global and regional actors compete for influence.

In terms of economic reforms, the EU has stressed the ease of direct investment. There is an overlap here with its call for judicial reform as the EU is concerned to improve the business climate for its own would-be investors.

Kazakhstan’s links to Europe other than the EU were strengthened in early 2010 when it became the first former Soviet country to chair the Organisation for Security
and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). There were few tangible institutional or policy changes as a result of the lead OSCE role that Kazakhstan assumed, but symbolically, it was an important signal.

Kazakhstan’s chairmanship…served the domestic public relations agenda…Chairmanships in international organisations and holding high-level meetings in Kazakhstan…are intended to show domestic audiences that the countries leaderships enjoy strong international support and are accepted as peers by leaders of Western democracies (Shkolnikov 2011, p. 4).

More economic benefits are associated with the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development that co-invests in infrastructural projects with the Kazakhstan government.

Its stance on Kazakhstan is to a large extent a product of Europe’s idea of itself as a bounded political entity. Some have suggested, however, that given the lack of major deserts or mountain ranges between Europe and Central Asia, “we are all Eurasian now” as Bruno Maçães, the Portuguese Secretary of State for Europe, put it. In making his point that “[i]n the new age of geopolitics Europeans must think on a supercontinental scale”, he also referenced Mackinder, “the father of modern geopolitics”.  

Mackinder (1904) held the view that the landmass of Central Asia was the logical fulcrum or “heartland” of global politics. Politicians in Kazakhstan also reference Mackinder and see the Silk Road project as evidence of the relevance of the idea of a new supercontinent not defined by navigable shipping lanes but by ready interconnectedness. This view is echoed by Wang (Beng 2014) who juxtaposes what he sees as the Sino and Eurocentric take on global history with an interpretation of the role of the nomadic societies of Central Asia. As Neumann and Wigen (2013, p. 311) put it: “from the beginning of horseback riding some three thousand years ago and into the 18th century, the Eurasian steppe was home to polities, frequently sizeable and long-lasting”.

Since the eighteenth century, the continental core has become dominated by the maritime periphery, but this long established pattern is essentially vulnerable. Wang’s interpretation of history places Kazakhstan as the new intersection between Europe and China.

In the short term at least, Kazakhstan’s attitude toward Europe is characterised by “accompanying pragmatism” (Gubaidullina 2011), because these relations not only serve to Kazakhstan’s economic interest but rather also have very deep emblematic meaning. In Kazakhstan, the strategy is twofold: First is diversification of its routes, and second, more symbolic, is the need of the Kazakhstani regime being recognised by the EU “as a stable, just and open society”.  

Legitimacy and maintaining economic performance are important for the international audience as well for the domestic spectators.

For Kazakhstan’s regime rules of the game in relation to Europe include:

1. Maintaining and stabilising of power
2. Adopting a pragmatic orientation
3. Strengthening its economic position

Maçães, B. (2015), “We are all Eurasian now”, Financial Times (London), 25 November 2015.
General Secretariat of the Council (2007), European Union and Central Asia: Strategy for a New Partnership, Brussels: European Communities.
As noted above, the symbolism of the PCA, the affirmation afforded by apparent European approval and the tempered advice on potentially contentious issues such as human right and press freedom play into Kazakhstan’s general strategy. Europe is not a direct security threat to Kazakhstan, so relations are not influenced by pressing military considerations and the multi-vector stance is reflected in a pragmatic approach to European initiatives. As Anceschi (2014, p. 3) indicates: “local foreign policy makers [put] the maintenance of power at the epicentre of their relationships with Brussels... declining EU emphasis on good governance provided the Kazakhstani leadership with new opportunities to seek domestic political consolidation through foreign policy”.

The EU strategy in Central Asia is also straightforwardly in Kazakhstan’s interest in areas other than political reform. It calls for diversification of supply routes for oil and gas.9 A new Caspian Sea-Black Sea-EU energy transport corridor, an EU ambition, would be to Kazakhstan’s interests. Currently, most of Kazakhstan’s oil is transported to Europe via the Caspian Pipeline Consortium (CPC) that goes through Russia. Further, as Winrow (2006) points out in relation to gas rather than oil:

The Central Asians have been providing Russia with cheap natural gas, and this has enabled Gazprom to export...Russian gas to...Europe at a much higher price...[T]he Kremlin will not look favorably at attempts by the Central Asians to transport and sell their gas on European markets. Central Asian gas delivered to Europe through pipelines bypassing Russia would compete with Russian gas exports.

The competing interests could hardly be clearer. Some commentators, however, see the realistic tactics for the EU as being to improve its relations with Russia.

The EU seems to be betting that its economic concerns will trump any collateral political issues...Russia remains in a strong position to play spoiler of EU energy independence...A more prudent policy for Brussels...might be to repair its relations with Russia, but at the moment, the chimera of energy independence is overwhelming political realpolitik (Daly 2015).

For greater European energy independence, some see as essential a natural gas pipeline under the Caspian to Azerbaijan connecting to existing trans-Turkey infrastructure to Europe. To date, there is no agreement between the countries, including Kazakhstan, on the practicality of such a venture and the legal status of the Caspian remains unresolved. Nevertheless, having a trans-Caspian pipeline on the agenda at all is seen by some as suiting Kazakhstan’s bargaining position with Russia.

…the Kazakhstani government frequently manifested a relatively clear (if at times rhetorical) intention to commercialise its gas ties with the West...Astana’s policy of ambiguity vis-à-vis the [Trans-Caspian Gas Pipeline]...constituted an

---

9 Oil can be transported by ship much easier than gas so accessing pipelines on the other side of the Caspian is an option for Kazakhstan. For gas, a pipeline is the only feasible route.
indirect signal...strengthening its negotiating position in the Gazprom-dominated Eurasian gas market (Anceschi 2014, p. 9).

Kazakhstan has proved an agile player in the game relative to Europe both in its bilateral links to the more influential member states and the EU institutions. Nevertheless, to strengthen its economic position, it needs to diversify its economy, in part, by attracting FDI outside the sphere of energy. A critical consideration for potential investors is the prospect of continuing political stability. Clearly, the issue of political succession must be a factor in the assessment of risk in relation to Kazakhstan.

Here is a dilemma for the tactics adopted by the leadership of Kazakhstan. European countries are the major investors but the certainty they may seek in the long term is not compatible with the current short-term tactics in place. But, as Bohnenberger-Rich (2015, p. 337) speculates, “Nazarbayev is currently the sole guarantor of political stability, and uncertainties around his succession persist. The open succession question and ongoing inter-elite conflicts may lead to a prolonged leadership transition accompanied by open competition for power, which is likely to affect international investment on the ground”.

Though it is not covered in this article, Europe’s stance is mirrored by that of the USA. As Iseri (2009, p. 26) suggests, integrating Kazakhstan’s reserves into the Western energy market will serve the “US grand strategy...assessed in relation to potential Eurasian challengers, Russia and China”. There are also similar approaches to the conditions for FDI and wider political reform. For America, however, Kazakhstan is higher on its military agenda.

Conclusion

This paper has used the game approach to Central Asia to examine the role of Kazakhstan with particular reference to its energy policy and the EU beyond the geopolitical kitsch of New Great Game, and thus, referring to child psychology the paper has enriched the understanding of game analogy. The expanded understanding of the metaphor throughout the analysis of the Kazakh-EU energy relations provides a useful perspective and an accessible heuristic device. The concepts introduced such as “levels of the game”, “spectators” and the “role” actor decided to play strengthen the game analogy by the clear identification of patterns in the behaviour of states thereby structuring the narrative in an accessible way (Fig. 1). The original Great Game was dominated by narrow geopolitical understanding of the relations between players. It took into consideration only the idea of prize and conflicting interests and, as a rule, avoided the analysis of the changing behaviour. In particular, it neglected changing roles during the process of the game by actors, who actually view the game of their primary concern—not the world level of great powers, but rather at the level of neighbourhood. In our case, energy policy and access to Caspian resources were analysed from the perspective of Kazakhstan, which is now increasingly viewing itself as a stronger and more responsible player and not only in the regional arena: “Kazakhstan is not a silent by-stander in anyone else’s strategy. We are a country successfully making its own independent way in the world”. These changing patterns of behaviour and new roles taken by this actor affect significantly the whole process of
the game, making changes in the rules: not only regime survival and its legitimacy at domestic and international level are at stake but also the desires to play more independently of Russia policy and to diversify its energy routes. The Ukraine crisis and new energy policy of the EU put more nuances into the process.

This paper has been essentially elite- and state-centred. Clearly, however, Kazakhstan is not a player with a single purpose or unitary voice. Decisions made in the energy policy game reflect domestic tensions, elite inconsistencies and changing patterns of power. Nevertheless, it is possible to devise some dominant tactics that reflect the perceptions of the country’s leadership as to where their best advantage lies. It is clear that the tactics adopted stress avoiding both direct conflict and over-reliance on cooperation with any one player. Where possible and as its relations with Europe suggests, Kazakhstan attempts to eschew the reality or impression of dependence despite its obvious need to placate its two powerful neighbours. The elite seek to have Kazakhstan perceived as a global player and not just another Central Asian state.

A stable and prosperous Kazakhstan is in the short-term interests of all the other players, especially China with its restive western provinces. Russia’s tactics may be more competitive. Kazakhstan’s dependence on its distribution networks and its economic reliance on the larger EEU partner reduces its freedom of action. Because the EU is playing at such a distance, it can afford to be less wary of “coloured revolutions” and intra-elite coups than the other major players though its interests are also best served by stability.

In commenting on games, pundits often resort to clichés because the high level of uncertainty about the outcome makes decisive analysis open to almost immediate contradiction by events. Even players are unlikely to give very accurate accounts of tactics or behind the scenes discussions because of team loyalty and a propensity to keep opponents unclear about the state of strategies or preparedness. Further, public comment has an impact on the spectators both fans and foes. In sport, these restrictions are understood. Geopolitical competition attracts the analogy of the game in part for these reasons. It also suggests that the level of confidence and conviction that characterises the players affects the outcome. Thus, it is possible to “understand” the complexity of the situation by an assessment of the character of the key players and, for example, their proclivity to take risks or act rationally in the realist sense. Given these heuristic advantages, the Great Game will continue to be a powerful image.

It is important to acknowledge the shortcomings of the game approach. All games have significant differences, and the parallels drawn will always suffer from an innate procrustean tendency. Elements of cooperation and conflict, for example, may be identified to suit a particular conclusion. The idea of rules that the analogy suggests can also be overstated when applied to states pursuing their own self-interests. There is also the suggestion in the use of the idea of a game that the rules are not only recognised but also fixed. Obviously, in some contexts, states adhere to sets of explicit codes of behaviour, but for the most part, the “rules” are constantly being adjusted or ignored.

Perhaps, the most important shortcoming of the game analogy is the danger of trivialising political actions that have real and significant impacts on the lives
and well-being of the citizens of the “participating” countries. All the players can gain by engaging with each other even if their behaviour is clearly competitive. For the game to have this benign outcome, the players must allow Kazakhstan to preserve its stability and relative ethnic harmony and the EU to reduce its sense of energy insecurity. So, the emphasis should be on avoiding a narrative that assumes that the game is zero sum in the way that the former contest between Britain and Russia is portrayed.

Acknowledgments This article is based on the research project ELSCID. This project has received funding from the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 693799.

References

Ambrosio T, Lange W (2014) Mapping Kazakhstan’s geopolitical code: an analysis of Nazarbayev’s presidential addresses, 1997–2014. Eurasian Geogr Econ 55:5
Anceschi L (2014) The tyranny of pragmatism: EU–Kazakhstani relations. Europe-Asia Stud 66(1):1–24
Baran Z, Starr F, Cornell S (2006) Islamic radicalism in Central Asia and the Caucasus: implications for the EU. D.C., Johns Hopkins University, Washington
Beng OK (2014) The Eurasian core and its edges: dialogues with Wang Gungwu on the history of the world. Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore
Berti B, Mikulova K, Popescu N (2015) Democratization in EU foreign policy: new member states as drivers of democracy promotion. Routledge, London
Bohnenberger-Rich S (2015) China and Kazakhstan: economic hierarchy, dependency and political power? Unpublished PhD thesis, London School of Economics and Political Science.
Bossuyt F, Kubícek P (2015) Favouring leaders over laggards: Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. In: Wetzel A, Orbie J (eds) The substance of EU democracy promotion: concepts and cases. Palgrave Macmillan, London
Bouguer L (2012) The Case for Metaphor in Political Reasoning and Cognition. Political Psychol 33(1):145–163
Burkhanov A (2013) Ethnic state versus civic-nation state in Kazakhstan: national identity discourse in Kazakh- and Russian media of Kazakhstan. PhD Dissertation, Indiana University
Casey M (2015) Take note, Putin: Kazakhstan celebrates 550 years of statehood. The Diplomat, 14 September.
Chyong C, Slavkova L, & Tcherneva V (2015) Europe’s Alternatives to Russian Gas. European Council on Foreign Relations, available at: http://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary_europes_alternatives_to_russian_gas311666, accessed 1December, 2015.
Clarke M (2014) Kazakh responses to the rise of China: between Elite Bandwagoning and social ambivalence? In: Horesh N, Kavalski E (eds) Asian Thought on China’s Changing International Relations. Palgrave Macmillan, London
Collins N, Cottey A (2012) Understanding Chinese politics: an introduction to government in the People’s Republic of China. Manchester University Press, Manchester
Contessi N (2015) Foreign and security policy diversification in Eurasia: issue splitting, co-alignment, and relational power. Probl Post-Communism 62:5
Cooley A (2012a) “The New Great Game in Central Asia: geopolitics in a post-western world”, Foreign Affairs, 7 August.
Cooley A (2012b) Great Games, local rules: the new power contest in Central Asia. Oxford University Press, Oxford
Cummings S (2003) Eurasian Bridge or Murky Waters between East and West? Ideas, Identity and Output in Kazakhstan’s Foreign Policy. J Communist Stud Transit Poli 19(3):139–155
Daly J (2015) Can Turkmen Gas Disrupt Gazprom’s EU Market? Silk Road Reporters, 8 May.
Denzin N (1975) Play, games and interaction: the contexts of childhood socialization. Sociol Q 16(4):458–478
Domjan P, Stone M (2010) A Comparative Study of Resource Nationalism in Russia and Kazakhstan 2004-2008. Europe-Asia Stud 62(1):35–62
Edwards M (2010) The New Great Game and the New Great Gamers: disciples of Kipling and Mackinder. Cent Asia Surv 22(1):83–102
Gubaidullina M (2011) OSCE strategy for Central Asia at the new phase of relationship: the Kazakh context. Istor India 2:7
Holm-Hansen J (1999) Political Integration in Kazakhstan. In: Kolsto P (ed) Nation-building and ethnic integration in Post-Soviet Societies: an investigation of Latvia and Kazakhstan. Boulder CO, Westview Press
Hopkirk P (1992) The Great Game: the struggle for empire in Central Asia. Kodansha Globe, New York
Hopkirk P (2002) The Great Game Revisited? Asian Aff 33(1):58–63
Howie P, Atakhanova Z (2014) Resource boom and inequality: Kazakhstan as a case study. Resour Policy 39:71–79
Huizinga J (1949) Homo Ludens: a study of the play element in culture. Routledge & Kegan Paul, London
Iseri E (2009) The US Grand Strategy and the Eurasian Heartland in the Twenty-First Century. Geopolitics 14
Jacques, M. (2009) When China Rules the World: The End of the Western World and the Birth of a New Global Order. Penguin Books.
Khidirbekughli D (2003) US geostrategy in Central Asia: a Kazakh perspective. Comp Strateg 22(2):159–167
Kim Y, Blank S (2013) Same bed, different dreams: China’s ‘peaceful rise’ and Sino-Russian rivalry in Central Asia. J Contemp China 22:83
Kourmanova A, (2015) National Views: Kazakhstan. In Peyrouse S (ed.) How does Central Asia View the EU?, Working Paper 18 (EUCAM).
Kydd A (2015) International Relations Theory: the rationalist approach. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge
Laruelle M, Peyrouse S (2013) Globalizing Central Asia: geopolitics and the challenges of economic development. M.E. Sharpe, Armonk
Laumulin M (2000) Kazakhstan and the West: relations during the 1990s in retrospect. Central Asia and the Caucasus, available at: http://www.ca-c.org/journal/2000/journal_eng/eng02_2000/05.laum.shtml, accessed 15 November, 2015.
Lomagin N (2012) Interest groups in Russian Foreign Policy: the invisible hand of the Russian Orthodox Church. Int Polit 49(4):498–516
Mackinder H (1904) The Geographical Pivot of History. Geogr Soc 23:4
Mantel R (2015) EU-Central Asia Relations in the Energy Sector with a Special Focus on Kazakhstan. L’Europe en Formation 1:375
Morrison A (2014) Introduction: Killing the Cotton Canard and Getting Rid of the Great Game: Rewriting the Russian Conquest of Central Asia, 1814–1895. Cent Asian Surv 33(2):131–142
Neumann I & Wigen E (2013) The Importance of the Eurasian Steppe to the Study of International Relations. J Int Relat Dev 16.
Olcott M (1995) Soviet Kazakhstan: the demographics of ethnic politics. Probl Post-Communism 42:2
Putz, C (2015) Energy Dominates Kazakhstan-Europe Relationship. The Diplomat, 6 November.
Schatz E (2005) Reconceptualizing clans: kinship networks and statehood in Kazakhstan. National Pap 33(2):231–254
Schatz E, Maltseva E (2012) Kazakhstan’s Authoritarian Persuasion. Post-Soviet Affairs 28(1):45–65
Shkolnikov V (2011) The 2010 OSCE Kazakhstan Chairmanship: carrot devoured, results missing. EUCAM 15
Steans J, Pettiford L, Diez T, El-Anis I (2013) An introduction to International Relations Theory: perspectives and themes. Routledge, London
Stegen K, Kusznir J (2015) Outcomes and strategies in the ‘New Great Game’: China and the Caspian States emerge as winners. J Eurasian Stud 6(2):91–106
Weitz R (2013) Explaining Kazakhstan’s Mediation Mission. Cent Asia-Caucasus Anal 15:9
Winrow G (2006) Possible Consequences of a New Geopolitical Game in Eurasia on Turkey as an Emerging Energy Transport Hub. Turkish Policy Quarterly, 5, 2, available at http://www.esiweb.org/pdf/esi_turkey_tpq_id_62.pdf, accessed 29 November, 2015.