

ABSTRACT

**of the dissertation submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)
in the educational program "8D03105 – International Relations"
by MUKHAMETZHAN AKBOTA
on the topic "Kazakh-Kyrgyz relations in the context of geopolitical shifts:
problems and prospects of development"**

General characteristics of the dissertation research. The dissertation is devoted to a comprehensive analysis of the features of the formation of intergovernmental relations between the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Kyrgyz Republic in the context of geopolitical transformation, their current development dynamics, and their prospective evolution.

The study examines the relations between the two countries not only within the framework of traditional bilateral ties but also as a multi-level and interdependent system that integrates economic, institutional, transport-logistical, resource, and geopolitical dimensions within a unified analytical framework. The work consistently explores the historical stages of the development of interaction between Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, the mechanisms of cooperation within international organizations, the structure of trade, economic, and investment ties, their role in the system of transnational transport corridors, as well as issues related to the management of transboundary water resources.

On this basis, the dissertation aims to develop a comprehensive scientific model explaining the development of Kazakhstan-Kyrgyzstan relations and to identify effective directions for cooperation between the two countries under conditions of geopolitical change.

Relevance of the research topic. At the present stage, the system of international relations is developing under conditions of deep and complex transformation. The intensification of geopolitical competition, the restructuring of international trade and production chains, the expansion of sanctions policies, and changes in the security architecture necessitate a reconsideration of traditional models of interstate relations. Under these conditions, states' foreign policies are increasingly oriented toward the formation of systems of regional interdependence, the deepening of ties with neighboring countries, and the strengthening of cooperation within multilateral institutions. These processes are clearly manifested in Central Asia as well, transforming the region into an important space of geo-economic influence and competition for transport and logistical corridors.

In this context, relations between Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan acquire particular importance as a key component of regional policy. The ties between the two countries, based on historical and cultural proximity, have in contemporary conditions taken on a strategic and multi-level character, marked by increasing economic, institutional, and transport-logistical interdependence. At the same time, despite the deepening of integration processes, structural problems persist, including trade asymmetry, logistical dependence, border barriers, and "water-energy"

contradictions. This underscores the need for a comprehensive analysis of Kazakhstan-Kyrgyzstan relations and enhances the scientific and practical significance of studying their development prospects.

The aim of the dissertation research is to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the evolution of formation, current development dynamics, and structural characteristics of intergovernmental relations between the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Kyrgyz Republic in the context of geopolitical transformation, substantiating them as a multi-level and asymmetrical system of interdependence, as well as to develop recommendations and forecasts to ensure effective and sustainable cooperation between the two countries.

To achieve this aim, the dissertation addresses the **following objectives**:

- to analyze the theoretical and methodological foundations for studying intergovernmental relations between Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan and to determine their explanatory potential within the framework of international relations theories;
- to identify the stages of the formation of relations between Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan and to systematize the key features and factors of their evolution;
- to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the main directions of political, economic, and institutional interaction between the two countries, as well as the mechanisms of cooperation within international organizations;
- to assess the current state of trade, economic, investment, and service-sector ties between Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, identifying their structural features and asymmetry;
- to examine cooperation between the two countries within transnational transport and logistics projects, determining their geo-economic significance and role in regional integration;
- to systematize the prospects for the development of Kazakhstan-Kyrgyzstan relations under conditions of geopolitical shifts and to substantiate their model of multi-level interdependence;
- to develop scientifically grounded recommendations and practical mechanisms aimed at enhancing the effectiveness of cooperation between Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan.

Object of the study. Intergovernmental relations between the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Kyrgyz Republic in the context of geopolitical shifts.

Subject of the study. The content, mechanisms, and patterns of development of political, economic, institutional, and resource interactions between the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Kyrgyz Republic under conditions of geopolitical transformations.

Chronology of the study. The chronological framework of the dissertation covers the period from 1991 to 2026.

Theoretical and methodological framework and research methods. The theoretical foundation of the study is formed by the key approaches within international relations theory. In particular, the study employs the principles of realism and neorealism to explain states' national interests and security factors; liberal institutionalism is applied to analyze the role of international institutions and

integration processes; and theories of regional integration are used to identify patterns in the development of interstate interaction.

The methodological framework of the research is comprehensive in nature and is based on a combination of general scientific and specialized methods, allowing the relations between the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Kyrgyz Republic to be examined as a multi-level and dynamic system. Methodologically, the study relies on systems analysis, level-based and sectoral analysis, the historical-chronological method, comparative analysis, content analysis, and institutional analysis.

Scientific novelty and main results of the research. The scientific novelty of the study lies in the fact that intergovernmental relations between the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Kyrgyz Republic are considered not only within the framework of traditional bilateral ties but also comprehensively- as a multi-level, complex, and asymmetrical system of interdependence.

In the course of the research, a structural model of Kazakhstan-Kyrgyzstan relations is proposed for the first time. Within this model, the interaction of key factors is substantiated, including economic asymmetry, institutional integration, transport and logistical dependence, resource interdependence (water-energy system), and geopolitical adaptation.

The study reveals the nature of persistent structural contradictions in the relations between the two countries, despite the development of integration processes, and scientifically demonstrates that integration does not automatically lead to stability and harmonization of interaction.

Furthermore, the research identifies the asymmetrical nature of economic ties between Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan and substantiates a model of their functional complementarity, which allows for a re-evaluation of their role within the regional geo-economic system.

As a result of the study, the role of transport and logistics cooperation as one of the key drivers of bilateral relations is demonstrated: Kazakhstan is identified as a transit hub, while Kyrgyzstan occupies the position of a functional link within the regional logistics system.

Theoretical and practical significance of the research.

The theoretical significance of the study lies in the proposal of a new conceptual approach to the analysis of intergovernmental relations between the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Kyrgyz Republic. The research considers the interaction between the two countries not only within the framework of traditional bilateral ties but also as a multi-level and asymmetrical system of interdependence, substantiating its structural elements and internal patterns. This approach contributes to the development of international relations theory at the regional level and expands the theoretical tools for analyzing interstate relations in Central Asia.

The practical significance of the research is determined by the possibility of applying its results in the formulation and improvement of the foreign policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan, as well as in the development of bilateral and multilateral cooperation with the Kyrgyz Republic. In particular, the findings of the study can

serve as a basis for developing concrete recommendations in such areas as the development of transport and logistics infrastructure, effective management of transboundary water resources, diversification of trade and economic ties, and the enhancement of regional integration processes.

Furthermore, the results of the research have applied value for the activities of government bodies, international and regional organizations, as well as analytical and research centers. The materials of the study can be used in the educational process of higher education institutions in the fields of “international relations”, “regional studies” and “geopolitics” as well as in the development of specialized courses and teaching materials.

Thus, the present study not only contributes to scientific knowledge in theoretical terms but also provides a foundation for making practical decisions aimed at the effective development of relations between Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan.

Key provisions of the dissertation submitted for defense:

1) Intergovernmental relations between Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan have developed as a multi-level and asymmetrical system of interdependence. This proposition reflects that the interaction between the two countries is not limited solely to bilateral political ties but evolves simultaneously across economic, institutional, transport-logistical, and resource dimensions. At the same time, differences in economic potential and infrastructural capacities determine the asymmetrical nature of their interaction.

2) Despite the deepening of integration cooperation between Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, structural contradictions persist, and integration cannot be regarded as an automatic guarantee of stability. Interaction between the two countries within frameworks such as the Eurasian Economic Union, Collective Security Treaty Organization, and other institutions strengthens the institutional foundation; however, issues such as trade inequality, administrative barriers, and political factors remain. This indicates that integration is largely formal and produces uneven effects.

3) Economic interaction between Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan develops on the basis of asymmetrical interdependence and a model of functional complementarity. Kazakhstan’s production, financial, and transit capacities, along with Kyrgyzstan’s role in services, tourism, and regional trade, form the complementary nature of their economies. However, the level of dependence within this model is uneven, which acts as a factor affecting the stability of relations.

4) Transport-logistical and transit corridors in Kazakhstan-Kyrgyzstan relations may act as a unifying factor when effectively coordinated, or as a source of competition and fragmentation when such coordination is lacking. At the present stage, new infrastructure projects in the region, including the China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan Railway, are transforming the configuration of the regional transport system. When implemented in a coordinated manner, such projects generate a synergistic effect; otherwise, they may lead to a redistribution of transit flows, increased economic competition, and the emergence of tensions in interstate relations.

5) The stability and effectiveness of relations between Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan directly depend on the level of coordinated regulation of resource interdependence, particularly water-energy factors. Transboundary water resources constitute a strategically significant element, as there is an objective contradiction between Kyrgyzstan's hydropower interests and Kazakhstan's agricultural needs. Effective regulation of these contradictions through institutional and negotiation mechanisms is a key condition for regional stability.

Approbation of the research

The main provisions of the dissertation were discussed at meetings of the Department of International Relations and World Economy of Al-Farabi Kazakh National University. A total of six scientific articles on the dissertation topic were published with the author's participation in Kazakh and English, including one article in a peer-reviewed journal indexed in Scopus, four articles in journals recommended by the Committee for Quality Assurance in Science and Higher Education of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Republic of Kazakhstan, and one article in the proceedings of an international scientific and practical conference. In addition, one monograph chapter and one annual publication dedicated to the Kyrgyz Republic were published.

Structure of the dissertation research

The dissertation consists of an introduction, three chapters, a conclusion, a list of references, and appendices.