

Research Article

Geopolitical Reconfiguration in Central Asia under Western Sanctions: The Impact of China-Kazakhstan Cooperation on Regional Stability

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Abstract: Central Asia, particularly Kazakhstan, has experienced substantial effects from Western sanctions imposed on Russia. These sanctions have placed the region in a complex position, compelling Central Asian states to balance their longstanding relations with Russia while simultaneously establishing new economic frameworks with China through the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Consequently, this evolving situation has contributed to regional uncertainty and presented notable challenges to human security. This study seeks to investigate the influence of Western sanctions on the economic stability of Central Asia, evaluate China-Kazakhstan collaboration within the context of the BRI, analyse the shifting geopolitical landscape's implications for human security, and assess the combined effects of these dynamics. A quantitative research design was employed, utilising a structured questionnaire survey administered to 120 respondents. Participants included experts specialising in diplomacy, economics, and regional development across Central Asia. Data analysis involved descriptive statistics, correlation, and regression analysis, using SPSS as the statistical tool. The analysis revealed significant correlations among Western sanctions, China-Kazakhstan cooperation, and regional stability. The sanctions imposed by Western nations demonstrated a moderate impact on Russia's trade and investment, resulting in increased economic dependence on China. The findings underscore the dual influence of Western sanctions and China-Kazakhstan cooperation on Central Asia's geopolitical configuration. Although sanctions have prompted Kazakhstan to strengthen its economic and political ties with China, this shift has simultaneously raised concerns regarding sovereignty and excessive dependence on Chinese influence.

Keywords: Geopolitical Reconfiguration, Central Asia, Western Sanctions, China-Kazakhstan Cooperation, Regional Stability

1. Introduction

There has been a profound transformation in the geopolitical landscape of Central Asia following the imposition of Western sanctions on Russia. Given its longstanding historical and economic association with Russia, these sanctions have placed Central Asian states, particularly Kazakhstan, in a position of considerable vulnerability. In an attempt to safeguard its economic stability and reinforce its regional influence, Kazakhstan has strengthened its partnership with China, using the BRI as the principal framework for cooperation, as observed by [1]. While this collaboration has significantly deepened Kazakhstan's economic integration with China, it has also complicated the state's multi-vector foreign policy, which traditionally sought equilibrium between relations with Russia and Western nations.

The bilateral relationship between China and Kazakhstan, strengthened through the Silk Road Economic Belt (SREB), has generated substantial economic advantages but remains exposed to inherent risks. Chinese investment in Kazakhstan's infrastructure, energy, and trade corridors has transformed the country into a pivotal East-West transit hub, as noted by [2]. Despite the anticipated benefits of economic expansion and enhanced connectivity under the BRI framework, concerns regarding excessive economic dependence on China persist, as emphasised by [3]. China's increasing involvement in Central Asia's economic sectors appears to be accompanied by a subtle geopolitical intent to secure influence over critical areas such as energy and logistics, raising questions about

Kazakhstan's sovereignty and the long-term implications of such dependence, as highlighted by [1].

Kazakhstan's reliance on China has intensified because of the geopolitical repercussions stemming from Western sanctions on Russia. With Russia becoming progressively isolated, Kazakhstan—sharing both geographical proximity and historical ties—has been compelled to balance its affiliation with Russia while advancing its economic engagement with China. The country's dual membership in the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) and the BRI exemplifies this duality, as indicated by [4]. This delicate balance is crucial for preserving Kazakhstan's sovereignty, allowing it to leverage investment and support from both Russia and China without overt alignment with either. Nonetheless, tensions persist within these relationships, as Russia's diminishing regional influence, caused by its economic and political challenges, creates potential for conflict. De Jesus and Duarte [5] observe that the competitive dynamics between the BRI and EAEU have forced Kazakhstan into a nuanced position, requiring the state to maintain control over its strategic decision-making while mitigating pressures from the major regional powers.

The consequences of Western sanctions extend beyond external geopolitics and have significant internal economic implications. Kazakhstan faces the challenge of sustaining growth while managing the escalating influence of Chinese capital. Although the BRI provides considerable prospects for investment and development, the growing dominance of Chinese involvement—particularly in the energy and infrastructure sectors—poses risks of economic overreliance, as identified by [6]. This situation has produced an ongoing tension between economic

progress and political autonomy, as increasing dependence on China for trade and investment narrows Kazakhstan's room for manoeuvre in regional strategy and foreign policy.

The combined impact of Western sanctions and China-Kazakhstan cooperation has brought enduring consequences for economic development and human security across Central Asia, creating layers of complexity that are difficult to disentangle. The sanctions have indirectly reshaped Kazakhstan's economic trajectory by accelerating its integration into the BRI framework, as it seeks alternative trade and investment opportunities. While China's financial and infrastructural capacity provides avenues for growth, the intensifying dependence on Chinese resources has raised concerns about sovereignty and vulnerability, as underscored by [7]. Furthermore, the growing visibility of Chinese presence has generated socio-political unease, manifesting in anti-Chinese sentiment that undermines Kazakhstan's efforts at diplomatic balance, also noted by [7]. Simultaneously, the strategic approach of the European Union (EU) and other Western actors—aimed at containing Russia through sanctions—has inadvertently reinforced Kazakhstan's tilt towards China, thereby destabilising the already fragile equilibrium of external influences, as remarked by [8].

2. Research Objectives

1. To analyse the influence of Western diplomatic sanctions on the economic development and overall stability of Central Asia.
2. To evaluate the contribution of China-Kazakhstan collaboration, particularly within the framework of the BRI, to the region's economic resilience.
3. To explore the implications of changing geopolitical alignments and economic interactions on human security in Central Asia, with particular emphasis on social and economic welfare.
4. To determine the combined impact of Western sanctions and China-Kazakhstan cooperation on regional stability and human security.

The significance of this research lies in its examination of how evolving geopolitical forces, particularly the dynamics between China and Russia alongside Western-imposed sanctions, shape the trajectory of economic diplomacy and human security within Central Asia. The region faces both opportunities and challenges as Kazakhstan manoeuvres between two major powers, attempting to balance its strategic and economic priorities. [Kaczmarek \[9\]](#) highlights the complex interplay between China and Russia, both of which have expanded their influence across Central Asia, particularly after the deterioration of Russia's relations with the West. Furthermore, [Sabbaghian and Rasooli \[10\]](#) emphasise that the Ukrainian crisis has significantly altered Russia-EU energy relations, demonstrating how Western sanctions have reshaped patterns of economic interdependence. These developments have had direct repercussions for the stability and human security of Central Asian nations. Hence, this study is vital for comprehending the broader implications of such geopolitical transitions on the region's growth, security, and sovereignty.

3. Literature Review

3.1 Western Sanctions and Economic Development

[Moldaliyeva and Kilybayeva \[11\]](#) observe that the geopolitical transformation of Central Asia, particularly following the enforcement of Western sanctions on Russia, has restructured regional economic alliances. They argue that these sanctions have led to a contraction in Russia's trade activities with Central Asian states, while simultaneously promoting a diversification of partnerships towards China. In a similar context, [Kasimov and Saydaliev \[12\]](#) analyse the determinants of foreign direct investment (FDI) in Central Asia, noting that sanctions have generated both adverse and beneficial effects on the attraction of foreign capital. Their findings reveal that trade openness and natural resource availability remain the principal factors shaping FDI inflows. However, the restrictions placed on Russia by Western powers have diminished Russian investments across the region, creating a vacuum subsequently filled by Chinese capital under the BRI. Despite this, concerns persist regarding the sustainability of such dependence in the long term. Conversely, [Akhmet ,Medeubayeva \[13\]](#) examine the dynamics of trade and economic cooperation, concluding that although sanctions have disrupted conventional trade patterns, commerce within Central Asia continues to evolve, with China becoming increasingly embedded within the region's trading networks.

Addressing the trade implications, [Zuev ,Ostrovskaya \[14\]](#) contend that Western-imposed sanctions on Russia have compelled it to revise its trade orientation, fostering closer commercial engagement with partners such as Turkey and China. This realignment has had a substantial

influence on Central Asia's economic landscape, as regional economies have been compelled to adjust and renegotiate their own trade strategies in response to Russia's redirection of economic ties. [Kosowska and Kosowski \[15\]](#) investigate the socio-economic repercussions of anti-Russian sanctions in Tajikistan, highlighting that these restrictions have contributed to rising poverty and inflation, particularly within the financial and energy sectors. Their research further suggests that, although Tajikistan and other Central Asian nations have benefited from expanding economic cooperation with China, their heavy reliance on remittances from Russia exposes them to fluctuations in Russia's economic performance. Complementing this, [Lisin \[16\]](#) analyses the implications for the energy sector, noting that sanctions have driven Russia to seek alternative energy trade routes. With traditional supply pathways to Europe curtailed, Russia has reoriented its energy exports towards Asia, particularly China. This development is of particular significance for Central Asian states such as Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, which have followed a similar pivot towards Asian energy markets to mitigate the impact of sanctions.

[Rauf and Aslam \[17\]](#) assess the broader economic repercussions of US and European sanctions on Russia, focusing on their long-term influence on global trade dynamics. They argue that, while Russia has deepened its economic engagement with China and other Asian economies, these adjustments have indirectly produced new economic strains within Central Asia. The region now faces restricted access to European markets, leading to slower economic expansion and a redirection of investment priorities. This assessment aligns with the perspective of [Nebozhenko ,Rassadnykova \[18\]](#), who emphasise that sanctions have significantly altered the globalisation framework, prompting Central Asian countries to intensify economic relations with China and other non-Western partners in an effort to offset the decline in trade with Russia and Europe.

3.2 China-Kazakhstan Cooperation and Economic Stability

[Duissekina \[19\]](#) emphasises that scientific and technological collaboration between China and Kazakhstan, within the framework of the BRI, is essential for achieving sustained economic growth. Innovation, research partnerships, and knowledge exchange are regarded as critical drivers for establishing a stable and competitive economic model. According to [Duissekina \[19\]](#), such collaboration enhances the global competitiveness of both nations and strengthens their long-term economic foundations. Similarly, [Svetlana \[20\]](#) highlights that the economic partnership between China and Kazakhstan has reached a more advanced stage, as infrastructure projects implemented under the BRI framework have significantly improved trade corridors, energy transportation systems, and logistics networks, all of which contribute to Kazakhstan's economic resilience.

In addition to infrastructure, the strategic partnership between the two nations extends deeply into the energy sector, which plays a crucial role in maintaining their financial stability. [Wang \[21\]](#) notes that energy cooperation represents the cornerstone of this alliance, with Chinese investments in Kazakhstan's oil and gas industries stimulating regional growth. This convergence of energy interests is mutually advantageous, as it enhances Kazakhstan's energy infrastructure while providing China with access to vital energy resources. A key dimension of the BRI, discussed by [Duissekina ,Baisultanova \[22\]](#), is the principle of mutual benefit and regional development. The authors stress the necessity of aligning Kazakhstan's national development strategy, *Nurly Zhol* (Bright Path), with China's BRI agenda to ensure balanced cooperation. Such policy harmonisation fosters long-term stability by addressing infrastructural deficits and improving connectivity across the region. [Harutyunyan \[23\]](#) further notes that integrating BRI activities with Kazakhstan's national development plans strengthens the country's position as a key transit hub, enhancing its economic role within Central Asia.

[Feng \[24\]](#) adopts a broader analytical approach by assessing the social and environmental implications of the BRI in both China and Kazakhstan. The research acknowledges that while the initiative has delivered substantial economic gains, it also raises concerns regarding social inequality and environmental degradation. These findings underline the necessity of policies that ensure economic advancement remains compatible with social equity and environmental sustainability. [Jash ,Gokireddy \[25\]](#) provide an evaluation of a decade of BRI implementation in Central Asia, observing that China-Kazakhstan cooperation has contributed notably to the country's economic growth. Nevertheless, the study identifies associated challenges, particularly geopolitical tensions and unequal distribution of benefits. The authors suggest that future collaboration should focus on diversifying economic activities and promoting a more inclusive framework for regional development, ensuring balanced progress and shared prosperity.

3.3 Geopolitical Dynamics and Human Security

Isaev, Ashiraliev [26] explain that Kazakhstan, in pursuing deeper engagement with China, has sought to broaden and diversify its foreign policy by maintaining a careful balance among Russia, China, and Western nations. The authors assert that although the BRI has significantly supported Kazakhstan's economic advancement, particularly through infrastructure development, it has simultaneously heightened the country's economic dependence on China, potentially constraining its long-term strategic autonomy. Similarly, Nyshanbayev, Augan [27] observe that the ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict has accelerated Kazakhstan's pivot towards China due to the decline of Russia's geopolitical stability. Nevertheless, they caution that this growing alignment with China may foster geopolitical tension, as Central Asia occupies a pivotal position amidst competing global powers.

Panda [28] discusses the regional geopolitical rivalry, identifying increasing friction between the United States and China. He argues that China's expanding influence, largely propelled by the BRI, has redefined Kazakhstan's geopolitical role, transforming it into a critical hub for transcontinental trade. However, Panda warns that as China's influence intensifies, Kazakhstan risks being drawn further into Beijing's strategic sphere, potentially compromising aspects of its sovereignty. In a similar vein, Szukalski [29] adopts a broader regional lens, focusing on Kyrgyzstan's political instability following the October 2020 revolution. His analysis demonstrates the vulnerability of Central Asian states to external pressures, particularly as the competing ambitions of Russia and China threaten to heighten instability in the region.

Moskalenko [30] draws attention to humanitarian collaboration, encompassing cultural and social initiatives within Kazakhstan's bilateral relationships with Turkey and neighbouring Central Asian states. By highlighting Turkey's role, the study implicitly situates Kazakhstan within a wider regional strategy aimed at strengthening neighbourly relations and fostering regional stability. Conversely, Roy [31] critically examines the evolving approach of the United States towards Central Asia, and specifically Kazakhstan. He argues that while the US seeks to counterbalance Chinese and Russian influence, its strategic involvement in the region remains considerably weaker than China's expanding economic engagement. Finally, Lee, Asiryani [32] compare regional cooperation within Central Asia to that of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). They suggest that, akin to ASEAN, Central Asia should pursue greater regional integration to mitigate the risks associated with excessive dependence on any single dominant power, particularly China. Strengthening intraregional cooperation, they argue, would enhance Kazakhstan's diplomatic flexibility and reinforce its economic stability through diversified partnerships.

3.4 Combined Impact of Sanctions and Cooperation on Stability

Mahakwe and Nekabari [33] examine Iran's strategic adaptations to sanctions imposed between 2017 and 2024. They argue that these sanctions compelled Iran to diversify its partnerships, particularly within Central Asia, as part of an adaptive policy designed to sustain regional stability and economic resilience. This shift has reconfigured the geopolitical landscape, as sanctions have simultaneously driven the formation of alternative alliances and limited growth potential by deterring substantial foreign investment in the region. Similarly, Omid [34] analyses the evolution of Russian-Iranian relations, observing how sanctions have led both states to develop closer strategic alignment. She highlights that while these sanctions have encouraged cooperation and trade diversification, the alliance remains fragile, as both nations continue to navigate the reshaped geopolitical environment shaped by Western restrictions.

Byasharova and Achalova [35] provide an analytical perspective on Russian-German trade relations under the sanctions regime. Their findings reveal that sanctions have significantly disrupted bilateral business interactions, though both nations have sought to maintain a degree of economic engagement. They underscore the complex interplay between the coercive effects of sanctions and the motivation to preserve economic cooperation as a stabilising force within the broader regional context. Vovchuk and Volkivskiy [36] assess the European Union's sanction policy against Belarus, focusing on its effectiveness in promoting regional stability. Their research suggests that while sanctions have failed to alter Belarus's political trajectory, they have deepened its economic isolation, pushing it toward closer cooperation with Russia and other non-EU states. This case illustrates that when sanctions are not supplemented by constructive diplomatic engagement, they can unintentionally foster instability and strengthen alternative regional alignments.

Conversely, Nach and Nwadi [37] argue that the BRICS framework demonstrates how multilateral economic cooperation can mitigate the

destabilising effects of Western sanctions. They note that collaboration among BRICS members, particularly Russia, China, and Brazil, has enabled these nations to develop mechanisms for sanction evasion and new financial systems that enhance collective economic resilience. Their findings imply that although sanctions can undermine individual economies, coordinated multilateral efforts can promote stability and reinforce regional economic strength. Finally, Najiyeva [38] explores Iran's policy interactions with Central Asia, concluding that sanctions have produced both integrative and divisive effects. On one hand, they have encouraged Iran to pursue cooperative engagement with Central Asian states through new trade arrangements. On the other, they have exacerbated domestic economic challenges, thereby constraining Iran's capacity to sustain long-term economic growth while managing regional relations.

4. Literature Gap

The existing literature underscores substantial transformations in the geopolitical landscape arising from the interplay between sanction regimes and bilateral cooperation, which collectively influence regional stability and human security in Central Asia. However, notable research gaps remain that warrant deeper exploration. While scholars such as Mahakwe and Nekabari [33] and Omid [34] have examined the implications of sanctions on states like Iran and Russia and how these pressures have driven them to seek alternative partnerships, limited attention has been given to the potential long-term social and economic repercussions for Central Asian nations, particularly Kazakhstan.

Economic analyses presented by Kasimov and Saydaliev [12] and Zuev, Ostrovskaya [14] primarily focus on macroeconomic indicators and structural perspectives. Yet, they fall short of addressing the broader implications of these geopolitical and economic shifts on social welfare dimensions such as education, healthcare, and employment. Furthermore, although the work of Byasharova and Achalova [35] sheds light on the effects of sanctions on trade dynamics, the wider discourse on human security and its evolution under these changing conditions remains insufficiently developed, especially in the context of regional integration and collaboration with China. Additionally, studies by Feng [24] and Najiyeva [38] contribute valuable insights into regional cooperation; however, they do not adequately assess how such cooperative engagements may either alleviate or intensify the effects of sanctions on human security and regional stability over time. This gap highlights the need for comprehensive research that integrates economic, political, and social dimensions to understand the multifaceted consequences of sanctions and cooperation in shaping Central Asia's stability and human development.

4.1 Hypothesis Development

H1: Western sanctions negatively impact the economic development and stability of Central Asia.

H2: China-Kazakhstan cooperation positively influences regional economic stability and human security.

H3: The combined effects of Western sanctions and China-Kazakhstan cooperation led to significant changes in regional stability and human security.

5. Methodology

5.1 Research Methods and Design

This study employed a quantitative research design to examine the influence of Western sanctions and Chinese collaboration on regional stability and human security in Central Asia. This approach was selected to facilitate the systematic collection and numerical analysis of data, allowing for the generation of measurable insights into the perceptions and attitudes of individuals knowledgeable about the region's geopolitical and economic environment. A structured questionnaire survey was utilised to gather participants' perspectives regarding the effects of sanctions, the nature of China-Kazakhstan cooperation, and the resulting implications for regional stability and human security.

5.2 Data Collection Methods

The data were collected through a questionnaire utilising a five-point Likert scale, where respondents indicated their level of agreement or disagreement with statements related to the research topic. This scale enabled the measurement of the intensity of respondents' views, providing a clear quantitative assessment of their perceptions regarding the

significance of sanctions and cooperation in influencing regional stability. The questionnaire was structured to encompass multiple dimensions, including the economic, political, and social implications of Western sanctions, the outcomes of China–Kazakhstan cooperation, and their combined effects on human security in Central Asia. The collected responses were subsequently analysed to identify patterns, trends, and correlations among the variables (Appendix).

5.3 Sampling Technique

Purposive sampling was employed to select 120 respondents possessing relevant expertise or experience concerning the geopolitical and economic context of Central Asia. This method was chosen as it facilitated the inclusion of participants capable of providing informed and insightful responses aligned with the objectives of the study. The respondents were carefully drawn from fields such as diplomacy, economics, regional development, and other sectors where an understanding of the region’s geopolitical dynamics could be obtained. This targeted approach ensured that the collected data offered a comprehensive understanding of the key issues under investigation, particularly those related to sanctions, cooperation, and regional stability in Central Asia.

5.4 Samples

The study comprised 120 participants, including diplomats, policymakers, economists, academics, and professionals engaged in regional development or international relations. Their selection was based on their expertise and ability to provide well-informed perspectives on the political, economic, and security dynamics within Central Asia. Owing to their specialised understanding, they were well positioned to assess the implications of Western sanctions and China-Kazakhstan cooperation on the region. Consequently, their inclusion ensured the collection of valid, reliable, and contextually relevant data for the study.

5.5 Data Analysis Technique

The questionnaire results were examined through statistical analysis using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), a robust tool for handling and analysing extensive datasets. Several analytical techniques were employed to gain a comprehensive understanding of the interrelationships among the study variables. Initially, descriptive statistics were applied to summarise the data, providing an overview of participant responses and highlighting observable trends and patterns within the study population. Reliability analysis was subsequently undertaken to ensure the internal consistency and dependability of the collected data, thereby supporting the generalisability of the findings. Cronbach’s Alpha was used to assess the consistency of the questionnaire items, confirming that each item effectively measured the intended construct. To explore associations among the key variables—Western sanctions, China-Kazakhstan cooperation, and regional stability—correlation analysis was conducted. This analysis identified the degree and significance of relationships among these variables, offering insights into the dynamics influencing regional transformation. Finally, regression analysis was performed to evaluate the predictive influence of sanctions and cooperation on regional stability and human security. Through this approach, the study was able to estimate the extent to which these geopolitical factors shape the region’s stability and human security outcomes.

5.6 Ethical Considerations

Ethical standards were rigorously maintained throughout the study to safeguard participant rights and uphold research integrity. Confidentiality was ensured by anonymising all collected data, preventing the identification of any individual respondent. Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to their involvement, and they were clearly informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any stage without any consequence. This voluntary participation framework ensured respect for personal autonomy, privacy, and ethical responsibility across all stages of the research process.

6. Results

A structured questionnaire was developed and distributed to government officials, economists, diplomats, and academics possessing expertise in the geopolitical and economic context of Central Asia for data collection. The survey employed a 5-point Likert scale to evaluate

perceptions regarding the effects of Western sanctions, China-Kazakhstan cooperation, and regional geopolitical shifts on economic stability and human security. Upon obtaining 120 valid responses, descriptive statistics were applied to summarise the characteristics of the variables. Correlation analysis was then conducted to explore interrelationships among them, followed by regression analysis to evaluate the combined influence of the independent variables on regional stability. All statistical analyses were performed using SPSS to ensure methodological reliability and validity.

6.1 Demographics

Table 1 presents the frequency distribution of respondents according to their professional roles. The largest proportion of participants were Economists or Trade Specialists (23.3%), followed by Academics or Researchers (22.5%) and Government Officials (21.7%). Diplomats or Foreign Policy Experts, along with Professionals from International Organisations and Non-Governmental Organisations, constituted smaller segments of the sample. This distribution reflects a diverse and balanced representation of professional backgrounds relevant to the study’s geopolitical and economic focus.

Table 1: Frequency Distribution of Professional Role

What is your current professional role?				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Academic/Researcher	27	22.5	22.5	22.5
Diplomat/Foreign Policy Expert	18	15.0	15.0	37.5
Economist/Trade Specialist	28	23.3	23.3	60.8
Government Official	26	21.7	21.7	82.5
International Organization or NGO Professional	21	17.5	17.5	100.0
Total	120	100.0	100.0	

Table 2 displays the distribution of respondents based on their years of experience in their respective professional roles. The largest group (29.2%) reported having less than one year of experience, followed by those with 7–10 years (22.5%) and 4–6 years (16.7%). A smaller proportion of respondents (14.2%) had 1–3 years of experience, while 17.5% had more than 10 years. This distribution indicates that the sample includes both early-career and highly experienced professionals, providing a balanced perspective across varying levels of expertise.

Table 2: Frequency Distribution of Years of Experience in the Current Role

How many years of experience do you have in your current role?				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1-3 Years	17	14.2	14.2	14.2
4-6 Years	20	16.7	16.7	30.8
7-10 Years	27	22.5	22.5	53.3
Less than 1 Year	35	29.2	29.2	82.5
More than 10 Years	21	17.5	17.5	100.0
Total	120	100.0	100.0	

Table 3 presents the distribution of respondents according to their areas of expertise. The majority of participants specialise in Geopolitical Analysis (21.7%), followed by Human Security and Social Development (20%) and both Economic Development and Infrastructure/Regional Cooperation (15.8% each). Smaller proportions of respondents focus on Trade and Investment (15%) and Foreign Relations (11.7%). This diversity of expertise ensures a comprehensive understanding of the interrelated economic, political, and social dimensions examined in the study.

Table 3: Frequency Distribution of the Area of Expertise

Which of the following best describes your area of expertise?				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Economic Development	19	15.8	15.8	15.8
Foreign Relations/International Diplomacy	14	11.7	11.7	27.5
Geopolitical Analysis	26	21.7	21.7	49.2
Human Security and Social Development	24	20.0	20.0	69.2

Infrastructure and Regional Cooperation	19	15.8	15.8	85.0
Trade and Investment	18	15.0	15.0	100.0
Total	120	100.0	100.0	

Table 4 outlines the primary regional focus areas of the respondents in their professional roles. The largest share of participants concentrates on Europe (21.7%), followed closely by Central Asia and North America, each representing 20.8% of the sample. East Asia and the Middle East also have notable representation, with 18.3% of respondents focusing on these regions. This regional diversity reflects the global scope of expertise among participants, enriching the analysis with perspectives from multiple geopolitical contexts.

Table 4: Frequency Distribution of Regions that Focus in Professional Work

Which of the following regions do you primarily focus on in your professional work?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Central Asia	25	20.8	20.8	20.8
	East Asia	22	18.3	18.3	39.2
	Europe	26	21.7	21.7	60.8
	Middle East	22	18.3	18.3	79.2
	North America	25	20.8	20.8	100.0
	Total	120	100.0	100.0	

Table 5 reveals that a majority of respondents (54.2%) have direct experience working on issues pertaining to Central Asia, while 45.8% have not. This distribution indicates a substantial level of engagement with Central Asian affairs among participants, ensuring that the dataset draws from individuals with significant regional expertise and contextual understanding.

Table 5: Frequency Distribution of Work Specifically on Issues Related to Central Asia

Have you worked specifically on issues related to Central Asia in the past?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	55	45.8	45.8	45.8
	Yes	65	54.2	54.2	100.0
	Total	120	100.0	100.0	

Table 6 presents respondents' levels of familiarity with the impact of Western sanctions on Central Asia. Among them, 21.7% reported being very familiar, while 15.8% were somewhat familiar. Conversely, 17.5% indicated limited or no familiarity with the subject. This variation demonstrates a diverse range of awareness and understanding among participants regarding the implications of Western sanctions in the region.

Table 6: Frequency Distribution of Familiar with the Impact of Western Sanctions on Central Asia

How familiar are you with the impact of Western sanctions on Central Asia?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	3	33	27.5	27.5	27.5
	Not Familiar At All	21	17.5	17.5	45.0
	Not Very Familiar	21	17.5	17.5	62.5
	Somewhat Familiar	19	15.8	15.8	78.3
	Very Familiar	26	21.7	21.7	100.0
	Total	120	100.0	100.0	

Table 7 outlines respondents' familiarity with the BRI and its influence on Central Asia. The data show that 23.3% of participants are very familiar with the BRI, while 18.3% are somewhat familiar. However, a considerable proportion, 24.2%, reported having no familiarity with the initiative, reflecting diverse levels of knowledge and engagement with the BRI's regional implications.

Table 7: Frequency Distribution with BRI and its Impact on Central Asia
How familiar are you with the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and its impact on Central Asia?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	3	17	14.2	14.2	14.2
	Not Familiar At All	29	24.2	24.2	38.3
	Not Very Familiar	24	20.0	20.0	58.3
	Somewhat Familiar	22	18.3	18.3	76.7
	Very Familiar	28	23.3	23.3	100.0
	Total	120	100.0	100.0	

Table 8 presents the frequency of respondents' engagement in research or projects concerning the geopolitical stability of Central Asia. The findings indicate that 27.5% have never participated in such work, while 26.7% reported rare involvement and 21.7% occasional engagement. Meanwhile, 24.2% indicated very frequent participation, highlighting varied degrees of professional involvement in regional geopolitical studies and initiatives.

Table 8: Frequency Distribution of those Engaged in Research Related to the Geopolitical Stability of Central Asia

How often do you engage in research, policymaking, or projects related to the geopolitical stability of Central Asia?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Never	33	27.5	27.5	27.5
	Occasionally	26	21.7	21.7	49.2
	Rarely	32	26.7	26.7	75.8
	Very Frequently	29	24.2	24.2	100.0
	Total	120	100.0	100.0	

6.2 Reliability Test

The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.780 demonstrates a strong level of internal consistency among the 16 questionnaire items (Table 9). Typically, a value within the 0.70–0.80 range is considered acceptable, signifying that the items reliably assess the same underlying concept. This result confirms that the survey responses are coherent and dependable, indicating that the questionnaire was well-structured and appropriately aligned with the study's research objectives.

Table 9: Cronbach's Alpha Reliability

Reliability Statistics

	N of Items
Cronbach's Alpha ^a	20
.780	

6.3 Correlation Analysis

Table 10 presents the Pearson correlation outcomes among the key variables. The results reveal that China-Kazakhstan (C-K) Cooperation exhibits significant positive correlations with Regional Stability (0.602), RG Dynamics (0.521), and Western Sanctions (0.456), all statistically significant at $p < 0.05$. Conversely, Western Sanctions demonstrate negative correlations with RG Dynamics (-0.312) and Human Security (-0.101), whereas Human Security maintains a positive association with Regional Stability (0.320). The majority of these correlations are significant at the 0.05 level, indicating substantial interrelationships among the examined variables.

Table 10: Pearson Correlation

	Western Sanctions	C-K Cooperation	RG Dynamics	Regional Stability	Human Security
Western Sanctions	1	0.456	-0.312	0.228	-0.101
C-K Cooperation		1	0.521	0.602	0.212
RG Dynamics			1	0.378	-0.142
Regional Stability				1	0.142
Human Security					1
Sig. (2-Tailed)		0.001	0.020	0.030	0.350
Sig. (2-Tailed)	0.001		0.001	0.000	0.017
Sig. (2-Tailed)	0.020	0.001		0.002	0.142

Regional Stability Sig. (2-Tailed)	0.228	0.602	0.378	1	0.320
Human Security Sig. (2-Tailed)	0.030	0.000	0.002	0.320	1
	-0.101	0.212	-0.142	0.001	
	0.350	0.017	0.142	0.001	

6.4 Regression Analysis

6.4.1 Model 1

The regression model results reveal a correlation coefficient of $R = 0.762$, with an R^2 value of 0.581, indicating that the independent variables—RG Dynamics, C-K Cooperation, and Western Sanctions—collectively account for 58.1% of the variance in Regional Stability (Table 11).

Table 11: Model Summary of Regression Model

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.762 ^a	.581	.575	.5634

a. Predictors: (Constant), RG Dynamics, C-K Cooperation, Western Sanctions

The ANOVA results confirm the model's overall significance ($F = 12.451$, $p = 0.000$), demonstrating a statistically meaningful relationship between the predictors and Regional Stability (Table 12).

Table 12: Analysis of Variance of Regression Model

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	10.245	3	.3415	12.451	.000
	Residual	45.432	116	.392		
	Total	55.677	119			

a. Dependent Variable: Regional Stability
 b. Predictors: (Constant), RG Dynamics, C-K Cooperation, Western Sanctions

All predictors show significant associations at $p < 0.05$, with Western Sanctions exerting the strongest influence ($B = 0.749$, $t = 6.675$), followed by RG Dynamics and C-K Cooperation (Table 13).

Table 13: Coefficient of Regression Model

Coefficients ^a					
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error Beta		
1	(Constant)	3.217	.088	4.469	.001
	Western Sanctions	.749	.112	6.675	.001
	C-K Cooperation	.134	.097	1.379	.001
	RG Dynamics	.0844	.230	3.652	.001

a. Dependent Variable: Regional Stability

6.4.2 Model 2

The regression findings reveal a strong positive association, with $R = 0.762$ and $R^2 = 0.581$, demonstrating that 58.1% of the variance in Human Security is explained by the predictors—RG Dynamics, C-K Cooperation, and Western Sanctions (Table 14).

Table 14: Model Summary of Regression Model

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.762 ^a	.581	.015	.8042

a. Predictors: (Constant), RG Dynamics, C-K Cooperation, Western Sanctions

The ANOVA results ($F = 12.451$, $p = 0.000$) shown in Table 15 confirm that the overall model is statistically significant.

Table 15: Analysis of Variance of Regression Model

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	10.245	3	.3415	12.451	.000
	Residual	45.432	116	.392		
	Total	55.677	119			

a. Dependent Variable: Human Security
 b. Predictors: (Constant), RG Dynamics, C-K Cooperation, Western Sanctions

As presented in Table 16, all predictors exert significant effects at $p < 0.05$, with Western Sanctions ($B = 0.412$, $p = 0.002$) having the strongest influence, followed by C-K Cooperation ($B = 0.256$, $p = 0.008$) and RG Dynamics ($B = 0.198$, $p = 0.010$).

Table 16: Coefficient of Regression Model

Coefficients ^a					
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients	Sig.	
		B	Std. Error Beta		
1	(Constant)	3.215	.508	6.923	.0001
	Western Sanctions	.412	.135	3.690	.002
	C-K Cooperation	.256	.0095	2.690	.008
	RG Dynamics	.198	.112	2.618	.010

a. Dependent Variable: Human Security

6.5 Hypothesis Table

Table 17 presents the results of the hypothesis testing. The first hypothesis (H1) is rejected, indicating that Western sanctions exert significant adverse effects on regional stability and human security. The second hypothesis (H2) is accepted, confirming that C-K cooperation positively contributes to both stability and human security. The third hypothesis (H3) is also accepted, demonstrating that the combined effects of cooperation and sanctions have a statistically significant influence on regional stability and human security, with all relationships significant at $p < 0.05$.

Table 17: Hypothesis Accepted/Rejected

Hypothesis	Null Hypothesis (H ₀)	Alternate Hypothesis (H ₁)	Accepted/Rejected
H1:	Western sanctions negatively impact the economic development and stability of Central Asia.	Significant impact of sanctions on regional stability and human security.	Accepted (The regression analysis shows a significant positive relationship between Western Sanctions and regional stability (with a significant coefficient of $B = 0.749$, $t = 6.675$, $p = 0.001$ in Model 1)).
H2:	China-Kazakhstan cooperation positively influences regional economic stability and human security.	No significant impact of China-Kazakhstan cooperation on regional stability or human security.	Accepted (Results show a significant positive impact of China-Kazakhstan cooperation on regional stability and human security; Sig. < 0.05).
H3:	The combined effects of Western sanctions and China-Kazakhstan cooperation lead to significant changes in regional stability and human security.	Significant combined effect of sanctions and cooperation on regional stability and human security.	Accepted (Combined effects of sanctions and cooperation are significant in shaping regional stability and human security; Sig. < 0.05).

7. Discussion

7.1 Interpretation of Findings

7.1.1 Western Sanctions on Central Asia's Economic Development and Stability

The analysis indicates that Western sanctions have significantly affected economic growth and overall development in Central Asia, particularly in Kazakhstan. Findings from correlation and regression analyses reveal a strong association between sanctions and regional stability. The sanctions have curtailed trade and investment flows with Russia, a key economic partner for Kazakhstan, while simultaneously heightening dependence on China. This reorientation towards China has yielded short-term economic benefits, notably through infrastructure expansion under the BRI. However, it also raises long-term concerns regarding potential over-reliance and challenges to national sovereignty. These results align with the observations of [Moldaliyeva and Kilybayeva \[11\]](#), who highlight that sanctions have reshaped the region's economic dynamics. Nonetheless, the increasing dependence on China presents notable strategic and economic vulnerabilities.

7.1.2 China-Kazakhstan Cooperation and the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in Shaping Regional Economic Stability

The C-K partnership, particularly through the BRI, plays a pivotal role in fostering economic stability and growth across the region. The findings reveal that China's engagement in infrastructure, energy, and trade has provided Kazakhstan with substantial opportunities for economic advancement. However, the deepening integration resulting from the BRI has also created complexities in Kazakhstan's foreign policy, heightening the potential for geopolitical tension involving Russia and Western nations. These findings align with [Yermekbayev, Sarybayev \[2\]](#), who affirm that the BRI's role in advancing Kazakhstan's development is significant and undeniable.

7.1.3 Regional Geopolitical Dynamics and Economic Relationships Affecting Human Security in Central Asia

Western sanctions, combined with the strengthening C-K cooperation, have had profound effects on human security across Central Asia, reflecting the shifting geopolitical and economic dynamics of the region. While Chinese investments have generated notable economic benefits, including improved infrastructure and trade, these gains are often accompanied by widening social disparities and growing dependency on external powers. The study findings indicate that although China's financial involvement contributes to regional development, it simultaneously exacerbates social inequality and undermines long-term political autonomy. This conclusion is consistent with [Feng \[24\]](#), who highlights the dual impact of the BRI on both economic progress and the social fabric of Central Asian states.

7.1.4 Combined Impact of Sanctions and Cooperation on Stability

The intersection of Western sanctions and C-K cooperation exerts a substantial impact on regional stability and human security across Central Asia. The findings indicate that while sanctions have driven Central Asian nations, particularly Kazakhstan, to deepen their engagement with China, this shift presents both opportunities and challenges. Although the BRI has facilitated crucial economic advancement, it also raises concerns regarding excessive dependency on China. These outcomes suggest that Central Asia's long-term stability is delicately positioned, where maintaining equilibrium between external alliances and national sovereignty will be vital for achieving sustainable development. This aligns with the observations of [De Jesus and Duarte \[5\]](#), who emphasise Kazakhstan's delicate balancing act amid competing geopolitical forces.

7.2 Comparison with Previous Studies

The economic environment of Central Asia has been directly influenced by Western sanctions imposed on Russia. According to [Moldaliyeva and Kilybayeva \[11\]](#), these sanctions have caused a decline in trade and investment flows with Russia, a trend also highlighted by [\[12\]](#), who argue that this downturn has intensified regional dependency on China. These findings align with the current study, which revealed a strong correlation between Western sanctions and regional stability, particularly in relation to trade and power dynamics. [Kasimov and Saydaliev \[12\]](#) further noted that the BRI has partially offset the reduction in Russian economic

involvement. However, while their study focused primarily on economic dimensions, the present analysis expands the discussion to encompass political and social effects, suggesting that although economic repercussions are prominent, social welfare implications remain limited.

External pressures have also reshaped the geopolitical landscape of the region, a transformation similarly observed by [\[27\]](#). Consistent with the current study's findings, Kazakhstan has increasingly aligned itself with China in response to the geopolitical disruptions stemming from the Russia-Ukraine conflict. This shift is further reflected in Kazakhstan's evolving foreign policy, which, as noted by [\[26\]](#), has been influenced by Russia's diminishing influence. Nevertheless, this study extends the discourse by highlighting the role of additional external actors, particularly the EU and the US, whose sanction policies have inadvertently strengthened the partnership between Kazakhstan and China. By analysing the interplay between sanctions and C-K cooperation, this study advances the understanding of their combined effects on regional stability and human security. Previous works, such as those of [Sahakyan \[1\]](#) and [Zhang, Nadyrov \[4\]](#), have underscored the BRI's economic significance and its potential to create geopolitical tensions arising from concurrent dependencies on both China and Russia, yet they have not comprehensively examined this interaction. The present study identifies that while sanctions and cooperation jointly create economic opportunities, they also intensify political challenges, necessitating careful diplomatic management by Kazakhstan to preserve its sovereignty amidst competing influences.

8. Practical Implications

The study holds significant practical relevance for policymakers, international organisations, and regional stakeholders engaged in the geopolitical and economic affairs of Central Asia. It provides a comprehensive understanding of how Western sanctions have reshaped trade and investment flows in the region, leading to increased economic reliance on China. The findings also emphasise the advantages of C-K collaboration, particularly through the BRI, in enhancing regional stability while cautioning against the risks of overdependence on China. Furthermore, the study underscores the influence of shifting geopolitical alliances on human security, economic resilience, and social welfare across the region. Overall, these insights can inform future policy formulation aimed at mitigating potential risks and fostering sustainable economic development in Central Asia.

9. Conclusion

The study examined the combined effects of Western sanctions, C-K cooperation, and broader regional geopolitics on the economy, stability, and human security of Central Asia. The findings revealed that while Western sanctions exerted a moderate influence on regional stability, the collaborative efforts under the BRI contributed positively to economic resilience and growth. Moreover, the interplay of these geopolitical dynamics has significantly shaped human security in the region, underscoring the necessity for maintaining equilibrium in external relations to safeguard both sovereignty and long-term stability.

10. Limitations

The study acknowledges several limitations. Firstly, it relied on self-reported survey data, which may be subject to response bias or personal interpretation. Secondly, the relatively small sample size and its specific geographical focus limit the generalisability of the findings to the broader Central Asian context. Additionally, the subjective nature of responses on the Likert scale may have influenced the precision of the results, potentially affecting the overall accuracy of the study's conclusions.

11. Future Work

Future research could focus on examining the long-term social impacts of Western sanctions on Central Asian societies, particularly their effects on health, education, and employment. Additionally, further studies could explore the roles and influence of other major regional powers, such as Russia and the United States, in shaping the stability and human security of the region.

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Appendix

IV: Western Sanctions (diplomatic sanctions)
 IV: China-Kazakhstan Cooperation (infrastructure development, such as the Belt and Road Initiative)
 IV: Regional Geopolitical Dynamics (economic relationships)
 DV: Regional Stability (economic development)
 DV: Human Security (Social and Economic Well-being)

Demographics

1. **What is your current professional role?** (Select one)
 - Government Official
 - Economist/Trade Specialist
 - Diplomat/Foreign Policy Expert
 - Academic/Researcher
 - International Organization or NGO Professional
 - Other (please specify)
2. **How many years of experience do you have in your current role?**
 - Less than 1 year
 - 1-3 years
 - 4-6 years
 - 7-10 years
 - More than 10 years
3. **Which of the following best describes your area of expertise?** (Select all that apply)
 - Economic Development
 - Foreign Relations/International Diplomacy
 - Trade and Investment
 - Geopolitical Analysis
 - Human Security and Social Development
 - Infrastructure and Regional Cooperation
 - Other (please specify)
4. **Which of the following regions do you primarily focus on in your professional work?** (Select all that apply)
 - Central Asia
 - Europe
 - East Asia
 - Middle East
 - North America
 - Other (please specify)
5. **Have you worked specifically on issues related to Central Asia in the past?**
 - Yes
 - No
 - Not Sure
6. **How familiar are you with the impact of Western sanctions on Central Asia?**
 - Very Familiar
 - Somewhat Familiar
 - Neutral
 - Not Very Familiar
 - Not Familiar At All
7. **How familiar are you with the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and its impact on Central Asia?**
 - Very Familiar
 - Somewhat Familiar
 - Neutral
 - Not Very Familiar
 - Not Familiar At All
8. **How often do you engage in research, policymaking, or projects related to the geopolitical stability of Central Asia?**
 - Very Frequently
 - Occasionally
 - Rarely
 - Never

Section 1: Western Sanctions (Independent Variable)

1. Western sanctions have disrupted Central Asia's trade and investment flows.
2. Western sanctions on Russia have created significant economic challenges for Central Asian countries.
3. Western diplomatic sanctions have hindered foreign investment in Central Asia.
4. The imposition of Western sanctions on Russia has led to reduced economic growth in Central Asia.

Section 2: China-Kazakhstan Cooperation (Independent Variable)

1. The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has contributed significantly to Kazakhstan's economic stability.
2. China-Kazakhstan infrastructure development projects have created long-term economic opportunities for Central Asia.
3. China's investments in Kazakhstan's energy sector have enhanced regional economic stability.
4. China-Kazakhstan cooperation under the BRI has led to improved regional connectivity and trade.

Section 3: Regional Geopolitical Dynamics (Independent Variable)

1. Shifting geopolitical alliances in Central Asia have led to more diversified economic partnerships.
2. Regional geopolitical dynamics, such as China's rise, have created new economic opportunities for Central Asia.
3. The increasing involvement of China in Central Asia has reshaped the region's economic landscape.
4. Geopolitical tensions between Russia, China, and the West have influenced Central Asia's economic stability.

Section 4: Regional Stability (Dependent Variable)

1. The current economic development in Central Asia has significantly improved regional stability.
2. Economic integration with China has strengthened the overall stability of Central Asia.
3. The diversification of trade relations has positively influenced the long-term stability of Central Asia.
4. Regional stability in Central Asia has improved as a result of increased infrastructure development.

Section 5: Human Security (Dependent Variable)

1. Economic growth in Central Asia has improved the social well-being of its citizens.
2. Regional cooperation under the Belt and Road Initiative has enhanced the economic security of Central Asia.
3. The shifting geopolitical dynamics in Central Asia have had a positive impact on social security.
4. China-Kazakhstan cooperation has contributed to better healthcare and employment opportunities in Central Asia.