

# Perceptions amongst Different Strata of Kazakhstan in Relation to the New Silk Road



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Simon Land  
Nazarbayev University

## Perceptions amongst different strata of Kazakhstan in relation to the New Silk Road

This paper does not have the goal of providing answers or conclusions to the title. It cannot, for (as widely agreed by Central Asian and Chinese scholars<sup>1</sup>) the data does not yet exist to provide such answers, and anything claiming to would be, at best, premature. What it does aim to do is to provoke debate and discussion for a framework about what could, and should, be researched about Kazakstani<sup>2</sup> perceptions of the New Silk Road/OBOR.<sup>3</sup>

Firstly, a discussion about Kazakh/Chinese relations is required. Michael Clarke outlines the debate<sup>4</sup> of whether Chinese domestic policy in regards to securing and pacifying the Xinjiang region determines their Central Asian (and Kazakh) policy, or whether resource and security desires for Central Asia affect the People's Republic of China (PRC) domestic policy.<sup>5</sup> That issue doesn't need to be conclusively settled for it still to be clear that policymakers in

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<sup>1</sup> For an example of this, see: Syroezhkin, K. (2009). Social Perceptions of China and the Chinese: A View from Kazakhstan. *The China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly*,7(1), 32. Retrieved November 4, 2017.

Chen, Y. (2015). A Research Note on Central Asian Perspectives on the Rise of China: The Example of Kazakhstan. *Issues & Studies*,51(3), 64. Retrieved November 5, 2017.

<sup>2</sup> *Kazakhstani* will be used in this paper to signify all citizens of Kazakhstan, regardless of ethnicity, and things related to or associated with the state Kazakhstan (for ex. Kazakhstani government/Kazakhstani population/Kazakhstani business elite). The term *Kazakh*, while also being commonly used to signify things from or related to Kazakhstan, will be used here only to refer to people who identify as descendants of the Turkic ethnic origin group who populated the region of the Eurasian sub-continent.

<sup>3</sup> OBOR will be the primary term used during this paper. There are several other terms, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and the New Silk Road (NSR) but OBOR is a translation of the Chinese phrase *Yídài yílù*, and is being used to discuss the project. While only part of the OBOR (the Silk Road Economic Road Belt) affects Kazakhstan (the main point of interest in this research) the term OBOR will still be used for consistency.

<sup>4</sup> Clarke, M. (2010). China and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization: The Dynamics of "New Regionalism", "Vassalization", and Geopolitics in Central Asia. *The New Central Asia*,117-147. doi:10.1142/9789814287579\_0006

<sup>5</sup> For discussions on this, see:

Clarke, M., Dr. (2015, March 18). March 18, 2015 "Looking West: China and Central Asia". Retrieved November 4, 2017, from [https://www.uscc.gov/sites/default/files/Clarke%20Testimony\\_3.18.15.pdf](https://www.uscc.gov/sites/default/files/Clarke%20Testimony_3.18.15.pdf)

Tukmadiyeva, M. (2013). Xinjiang in China's Foreign Policy toward Central Asia. *Connections: The Quarterly Journal*,12(3), 87-108. doi:10.11610/connections.12.3.05

China view a partnership with the elite in Kazakhstan (and Central Asia as a whole) as “intimately connected”<sup>6</sup> to their domestic strategy and objectives.<sup>7</sup> The OBOR can be considered, at least partially, as a tool to achieve these objectives, as Marek Jochec argues.<sup>8</sup>

This attempt at regional cooperation appears to be reciprocated at the elite level.<sup>9</sup> The Kazakhstani President, Nursultan Nazarbayev, has publicly championed the project, referring to the OBOR as a 'new geo-economic paradigm.'<sup>10</sup> He frequently speaks in favourable terms about both the OBOR and of increasing ties with China, suggesting that the partnership between Kazakhstan and China could serve as an example for other countries.<sup>11</sup> Kazakhstani business elites have also joined him by also publicly embracing cooperation with China and the OBOR.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Clarke, M. (2010). China and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization: The Dynamics of “New Regionalism”, “Vassalization”, and Geopolitics in Central Asia. *The New Central Asia*, 134. doi:10.1142/9789814287579\_0006

<sup>7</sup> Legvold, R. (Ed.). (2002). *Thinking Strategically: The Major Powers, Kazakhstan, and the Central Asian Nexus*. Massachusetts: MIT Press.

<sup>8</sup> Marek, J. (2017, June 30). Chinese Investment in the Framework of Belt & Road Initiative in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan: Current Situations, Challenges, and Perspectives.3-5. Retrieved April 18, 2018, from <https://research.nu.edu.kz/en/publications/chinese-investment-in-the-framework-of-belt-amp-road-initiative-i>

<sup>9</sup> Peyrouse, S. (2016). Discussing China: Sinophilia and sinophobia in Central Asia. *Journal of Eurasian Studies*,7(1), 17. doi:10.1016/j.euras.2015.10.003

<sup>10</sup> Malika Orazgaliyeva in International on 16 May 2017. (2017, May 24). Kazakh President attends One Belt, One Road forum, meets with leaders in China. Retrieved November 04, 2017, from <https://astanatimes.com/2017/05/kazakh-president-attends-one-belt-one-road-forum-meets-with-leaders-in-china/>

Clarke, M. (2014). Kazakh Responses to the Rise of China: Between Elite Bandwagoning and Societal Ambivalence? *Asian Thought on Chinas Changing International Relations*,141doi:10.1057/9781137299338\_8

<sup>11</sup> China became new driver stimulating international cooperation- Nazarbayev. (2017, May 15). Retrieved April 19, 2018, from [http://lenta.inform.kz/en/china-became-new-driver-stimulating-international-cooperation-nazarbayev\\_a3026344](http://lenta.inform.kz/en/china-became-new-driver-stimulating-international-cooperation-nazarbayev_a3026344)

<sup>12</sup> Shuiyu, J., & Zhong, N. (2017, June 09). Sino-Kazakh trade ties set to flourish. Retrieved November 05, 2017, from [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/business/2017-06/09/content\\_29678407.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/business/2017-06/09/content_29678407.htm)

Dyussebekova, Z. (2017, September 08). Citi expert talks OBOR, Kazakhstan's opportunities for growth. Retrieved November 05, 2017, from <https://astanatimes.com/2017/09/citi-expert-talks-obor-kazakhstans-opportunities-for-growth/>

Liping, G. (Ed.). (2017, September 12). China, Kazakhstan hold first local cooperation forum, agreeing to lift economic ties. Retrieved November 05, 2017, from <http://www.ecns.cn/2017/09-12/273201.shtml>

Rapoza, K. (2017, July 18). Kazakhstan Bets Big On Chinas Silk Road. Retrieved November 05, 2017, from <https://www.forbes.com/sites/kenrapoza/2017/07/18/kazakhstan-bets-big-on-chinas-silk-road/#21c63ab58053>

Expert views, closely linked to the political and business elite,<sup>13</sup> share similar views about the pros and cons of Chinese growth and reach in the region.<sup>14</sup> They rarely explicitly critique the Kazakh government and therefore also are mostly publicly positive about relations with China if slightly more cautious.<sup>15</sup>

The lower strata of Kazakhstan's perceptions, however, still need to be considered and this is not so clear-cut as the elite.<sup>16</sup> It could be interpreted that the OBOR (and increased Chinese interest and investment) has unnerved some demographics, cautious of real Chinese motivations for the project.<sup>17</sup> The official line from the ruling Communist Party of China (CPC) is that the OBOR is the next step in a connected, globalised world and a 'win/win' for the development of both China and any state wishing to join their 'circle of friends.'<sup>18</sup> While both the Kazakhstani government and business elite appear to believe this claim and publicly declare

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<sup>13</sup> Quoted in Clarke, M. (2014). Kazakh Responses to the Rise of China: Between Elite Bandwagoning and Societal Ambivalence? *Asian Thought on China's Changing International Relations*, 141-172. doi:10.1057/9781137299338\_8

<sup>14</sup> Syroezhkin, K. (2009). Social Perceptions of China and the Chinese: A View from Kazakhstan. *The China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly*, 7(1), 29-46. Retrieved November 4, 2017.

<sup>15</sup> Syroezhkin, K. (2009). Social Perceptions of China and the Chinese: A View from Kazakhstan. *The China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly*, 7(1), 32. Retrieved November 4, 2017

<sup>16</sup> For discussion on the separation of strata in Kazakhstan, see: Syroezhkin, K. (2009). Social Perceptions of China and the Chinese: A View from Kazakhstan. *The China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly*, 7(1), 31. Retrieved November 4, 2017

Sadovskaya, E. Y. (2007). Chinese Migration to Kazakhstan: a Silk Road for Cooperation or a Thorny Road of Prejudice? *China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly*, 5(4), 159-161. doi:10.1017/cbo9781316424193.002

Schatz, E. (2004). *Modern Clan Politics: The Power of "Blood" in Kazakhstan and Beyond*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, appendix

Chen, Y. (2015). A Research Note on Central Asian Perspectives on the Rise of China: The Example of Kazakhstan. *Issues & Studies*, 51(3), 67. Retrieved November 5, 2017.

<sup>17</sup> Tukmadiyeva, M. (2013). Xinjiang in China's Foreign Policy toward Central Asia. *Connections: The Quarterly Journal*, 12(3), 87-108. doi:10.11610/connections.12.3.05

Peyrouse, S. (2016). Discussing China: Sinophilia and sinophobia in Central Asia. *Journal of Eurasian Studies*, 7(1), 19. doi:10.1016/j.euras.2015.10.003

<sup>18</sup> Bagchi, I. (2017, May 13). India slams China's One Belt One Road initiative, says it violates sovereignty - Times of India. Retrieved November 04, 2017, from <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/china-road-initiative-is-like-a-colonial-enterprise-india/articleshow/58664098.cms>

a wish to be allies,<sup>19</sup> there is evidence that not all of Kazakhstan's strata share the same sentiment.<sup>20</sup> In April and May of 2016, protests in several areas in Kazakhstan broke out.<sup>21</sup> While some took the demonstrations to be expressing discontent with the regime of Nazarbayev and especially the recently devalued Tenge currency, the protests were publicly mainly focused on proposed land reforms that would allow foreigners (predicted to be mostly Chinese) to lease land in Kazakhstan long term for agriculture.<sup>22</sup> It proved to be an emotive issue in Kazakhstan and resulted in public rallies seldom seen in the post-Soviet state. The land reforms were subsequently suspended.<sup>23</sup> Speakers and demonstrators at protests in the Kazakh cities of Almaty and Aktobe reportedly gave the following comments:

*"We can't give land to the Chinese. If they come then they won't leave!"*

*"After 25 years, they will stay for 65. After 65 their descendants will take Kazakhstan's citizenship, and our descendants will be their slaves."<sup>24</sup>*

*"If we tomorrow give, or distribute, 1 million hectares of land, it would mean 15 people working per hectare. That means 15 million people would be brought from China. If one of those 15*

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<sup>19</sup> "One Belt One Road" to Bring New Opportunities to Silk Road Countries. (16, May 26). Retrieved November 04, 2017, from <http://www.icbc.com.cn/icbc/investment/financial%20news/onebelttoneroadtobringnewopportunitiesosilkroadcountries.htm>

<sup>20</sup> Clarke, M., Dr. (2015, March 18). March 18, 2015 "Looking West: China and Central Asia". Retrieved November 4, 2017, from [https://www.uscc.gov/sites/default/files/Clarke%20Testimony\\_3.18.15.pdf](https://www.uscc.gov/sites/default/files/Clarke%20Testimony_3.18.15.pdf)

<sup>21</sup> Kazakhstan's land reform protests explained. (2016, April 28). Retrieved November 04, 2017, from <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-36163103>

Marat, E. (2016, June 06). Kazakhstan had huge protests, but no violent crackdown. Here's why. Retrieved November 05, 2017, from [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2016/06/06/kazakhstan-had-big-protests-without-a-violent-crackdown-heres-why/?utm\\_term=.3bdf2385c7db](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2016/06/06/kazakhstan-had-big-protests-without-a-violent-crackdown-heres-why/?utm_term=.3bdf2385c7db)

<sup>22</sup> Kazakhstan's land reform protests explained. (2016, April 28). Retrieved November 04, 2017, from <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-36163103>

<sup>23</sup> The President of Kazakhstan signed the Law on the suspension of the Land Code. (2016, June 30). Retrieved November 04, 2017, from <http://atameken.kz/en/news/23256>

<sup>24</sup> Kazakhstan's land reform protests explained. (2016, April 28). Retrieved November 04, 2017, from <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-36163103>

*people were to give birth each year, that would be the end. In 50 years there would be 50 million Chinese [in Kazakhstan]”<sup>25</sup>*

This fear of perceived Chinese expansionism at the expense of Kazakhstani interests by a non-elite public suggests a split in Kazakhstani society in regards to China and the Chinese and, possibly by extension, the OBOR project. Studies on sinophobia<sup>26</sup> by scholars and its perceptions, effects and possible consequences for Central Asia, and in Kazakhstan in particular, are being discussed with growing frequency. Contemporary scholars argue that unlike a previous ‘Great Game’ that is too often used to describe modern events, Central Asian states are not just passive pieces being moved by superpowers.<sup>27</sup> They have agency in their issues, ambitions and obligations, and therefore domestic and regional concerns (including public perceptions of projects) influence their decision making.<sup>28</sup> This potential gap between high-level elite thinking and lower layers of society concerning China’s partnership with Kazakhstan could have domestic, regional and global consequences. The failure of any Sino/Kazakhstani partnership in the realisation of the OBOR could conceivably setback China and Kazakhstan’s economic and political policies due to both PRC leader Xi Jinping and Kazakhstani leader

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<sup>25</sup> Clarke, M. (2014). Kazakh Responses to the Rise of China: Between Elite Bandwagoning and Societal Ambivalence? *Asian Thought on Chinas Changing International Relations*, 162. doi:10.1057/9781137299338\_8

<sup>26</sup> For discussions on sinophobia in CA, see:

Peyrouse, S. (2015). Discussing China: Sinophilia and sinophobia in Central Asia. *Journal of Eurasian Studies*, 7. Retrieved November 09, 2017.

Laruelle, M., & Peyrouse, S. (2009). *China as a Neighbor: Central Asian Perspectives and Strategies*. Singapore: Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program.

<sup>27</sup> Cooley, Alexander. *Great Games, Local Rules: The New Great Power Contest in Central Asia*. Online, Oxford Scholarship, 2012.

Owen, C. (2017). The Sleeping Dragon Is Gathering Strength”: Causes of Sinophobia in Central Asia . *China Q of Int’l Strategic Stud* 2017.03:101-119,03(1), 103. Retrieved November 10, 2017.

<sup>28</sup> Clarke, M. (2014). Kazakh Responses to the Rise of China: Between Elite Bandwagoning and Societal Ambivalence? *Asian Thought on Chinas Changing International Relations*, 144 - 148. doi:10.1057/9781137299338\_8

Nursultan Nazarbayev's high level of political, economic and ideological investment in the project.<sup>29</sup>

So, having established that the OBOR is strategically important to both Kazakhstan and China, it would, therefore, stand that attempts to understand Kazakhstan perceptions of China and the OBOR would be of benefit to contemplating regional sensibilities. So what can be achieved in this paper and this conference - what is valuable to the studies and understanding of the new geopolitical realities of Central Asia - is to define the questions that will assist in examining the region. There is not currently any research in Kazakhstan related explicitly to perceptions to the OBOR, and the consensus is there is a gap in the literature. It is worth bearing in mind Syroezhin's advice though, that "gauging the attitudes of Central Asian countries, particularly Kazakhstan towards China and the Chinese is both *difficult* and *easy*"!<sup>30</sup> Research is also essential as Laruelle and Peyrouse argue that due to the nature of government and social structures, examination of public opinion is difficult to gauge in Kazakhstan,<sup>31</sup> and this work could help contribute towards expanding that examination.

Many studies still refer back to Sadovskaya's<sup>32</sup> work that investigated Kazakh attitudes about Chinese immigrants. It must be mentioned that this was completed in 2007, a period

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<sup>29</sup> Schmid, V. (2017, August 25). The 'Silk Road' Verdict. Retrieved November 05, 2017, from [https://www.theepochtimes.com/the-silk-road-verdict\\_2269520.html](https://www.theepochtimes.com/the-silk-road-verdict_2269520.html)

<sup>30</sup> Syroezhkin, K. (2009). Social Perceptions of China and the Chinese: A View from Kazakhstan. *The China and Eurasia Forum Quartely*, 7(1), 29. Retrieved November 4, 2017. My italics

<sup>31</sup> Marlène Laruelle and Sébastien Peyrouse (2009). Central Asian Perceptions of China. *The China and Eurasia Forum Quartely*, 7(1), 2. Retrieved November 4, 2017

<sup>32</sup> Sadovskaya, E. Y. (2007). Chinese Migration to Kazakhstan: a Silk Road for Cooperation or a Thorny Road of Prejudice? *China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly*, 5(4), 147-170. doi:10.1017/cbo9781316424193.002

before the OBOR was announced, Xi Jinping consolidated power and Xinjiang security measures became more sophisticated. She argues that there were many 'myths' about Chinese immigration and that four main examples of a lack of knowledge or ignorance of Chinese customs and history leads to increased fears of mass migration and sinophobia. Her objective was to measure four aspects: Awareness of the presence of Chinese; opinions about the impact of migration; the degree of awareness of China's culture and history; and attitudes towards Chinese migrants.<sup>33</sup> These factors and possible accompanying sinophobia could influence the way the OBOR is perceived. It is also critical in highlighting there is no single voice in Kazakhstan: Different regions, ethnicity, exposure, and class all affect perceptions of China and the Chinese. She contends that to understand the myriad of attitudes in a country as diverse as Kazakhstan correctly, then a separation between the political establishment, experts and the general public must be made.<sup>34</sup>

Syroezhkin's (2009)<sup>35</sup> work studied Kazakhstan attitudes towards the Chinese and how it relates to interaction with Chinese people and companies, relying in part on Sadovskaya's earlier research. He also argues that Kazakh enmity towards Chinese is correlated to the level of information and access to Chinese people and business enterprises local people have, in line with intercontact theory. Therefore the North and North West part of Kazakhstan (that is the farthest geographical difference from China) are more hostile than the South East. He

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<sup>33</sup> Sadovskaya, E. Y. (2007). Chinese Migration to Kazakhstan: a Silk Road for Cooperation or a Thorny Road of Prejudice? *China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly*, 5(4), 160. doi:10.1017/cbo9781316424193.002

<sup>34</sup> Syroezhkin, K. (2009). Social Perceptions of China and the Chinese: A View from Kazakhstan. *The China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly*, 7(1), 32. Retrieved November 4, 2017.

<sup>35</sup> Syroezhkin, K. (2009). Social Perceptions of China and the Chinese: A View from Kazakhstan. *The China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly*, 7(1), 29-46. Retrieved November 4, 2017



concludes the political establishment is amiable to China due to economic reasons, contrasted with lower strata local people whose attitudes are more commonly shaped by the volume of knowledge and interaction they have with China.

Burkhanov and Chen (2015)<sup>36</sup> studied Kazakhstani media on relations between China and Kazakhstan. The paper argues that analysis of Kazakhstan media, both private/state and Kazakh/Russian language, shows a divide in attitudes in Kazakhstan towards China and the Chinese. Starting from Laruelle and Peyrouse's (2012) work that argues "Central Asian populace does not look on Beijing's inroads into the region as favourably as do official discourses from Central Asian governments," it analyses the idea through a review of media discourse. It concludes that state media's views are on message with the policy of the Kazakh government while a wider variety of opinion is expressed in private media. Kazakh language media is more likely to be critical and/or distrustful towards China, whereas the Russian language media holds a more nuanced view which can also be, at times, subtly critical but appreciative of commercial opportunities. Their work states that "even at the expert level, there is a paucity of researchers who are studying contemporary China and who are capable of offering impartial views on that country and its people, *as well as an absence of expert views on the specificities of Sino-Kazakhstani relations*"<sup>37</sup>. This statement further emphasises the need for this discussion and the need for research.

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<sup>36</sup> Burkhanov, A., & Chen, Y. (8th February 2016). Kazakh perspective on China, the Chinese, and Chinese migration. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 39(12), 2129-2148. Retrieved November 4, 2017.

<sup>37</sup> Burkhanov, A., & Chen, Y. (8th February 2016). Kazakh perspective on China, the Chinese, and Chinese migration. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 39(12), p 2132. Retrieved November 4, 2017. My italics

Marek Jochec in the Business School at Nazarbayev University recently studied challenges and opportunities of regional economic cooperation between China and Kazakhstan/Kyrgyzstan. The paper included a section on business and government opinion towards Chinese investment, including knowledge of the OBOR. There was a difference between English and Russian language replies (Kazakh was not included as it is deemed elites use Russian as their primary language) with some enthusiasm for influence and economic partnership opportunities, but high levels of fear of Chinese migration.<sup>38</sup> This research was useful for providing information on elites but doesn't investigate the more varied strata of Kazakhstan.

In summary, there have been previous studies in attitudes towards China, Chinese businesspeople, Chinese culture, and Chinese immigrants in Kazakhstan but nothing directly related to Kazakhstani perceptions towards the OBOR. This gap in literature should be filled quickly for two reasons: Firstly, China's connections to Central Asia and Kazakhstan in particular, are deepening and perceptions could be reinforced with unknown future consequences.<sup>39</sup> Secondly, China's projected economic and political rise.<sup>40</sup> Xi Jinping has recently cemented power at the top of the CPC for the foreseeable future, becoming the most

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<sup>38</sup> Jochec, M *Chinese Investment in the Framework of Belt & Road Initiative in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan: Current Situations, Challenges, and Perspectives*. Working paper

<sup>39</sup> Jochec, M *Chinese Investment in the Framework of Belt & Road Initiative in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan: Current Situations, Challenges, and Perspectives*. Working paper

Chen, Y. (2015). A Research Note on Central Asian Perspectives on the Rise of China: The Example of Kazakhstan. *Issues & Studies*, 51(3), 66. Retrieved November 5, 2017.

<sup>40</sup> Chen, Y. (2015). A Research Note on Central Asian Perspectives on the Rise of China: The Example of Kazakhstan. *Issues & Studies*, 51(3), 66. Retrieved November 5, 2017.

powerful leader in China since Mao.<sup>41</sup> Under his leadership, China has openly, for the first time, expressed global ambitions to be world leading superpower<sup>42</sup>. Xi Jinping has taken ownership of the OBOR and staked a considerable amount of his reputation on its realisation.<sup>43</sup> If the project were to fail, Xi Jinping could be weakened, and the PRC's projected rise might also be checked. Kazakhstan, sharing a vast stretch of border with China and being pivotal to access the West, is seen as integral to the project. (cite) While it is possible that China could circumnavigate Kazakhstan, the amount of political and economic capital already invested would suggest that this would be a much less favoured policy. While China's soft power techniques, and their recognition for the need of such, have vastly improved over the previous decade<sup>44</sup>, it is yet to be seen how effective they are in Kazakhstan, especially when contrasted with reports of how ethnic Kazakhs are being treated in Northwest China.<sup>45</sup> Any political uprising or obstructions to the OBOR project in Kazakhstan which affects the realisation of the project could have consequences for both the leadership of China and Kazakhstan.

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<sup>41</sup>Soon-do, H. (2017, August 16). Xi Jinping Cements his Grip on Power at Beidaihe Meeting. Retrieved November 05, 2017, from [https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/xi-jinping-cements-his-grip-on-power-at-beidaihe-meeting\\_us\\_599403b1e4b0eef7ad2c028b](https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/xi-jinping-cements-his-grip-on-power-at-beidaihe-meeting_us_599403b1e4b0eef7ad2c028b)

China congress: No heir apparent as Xi reveals top leadership. (2017, October 25). Retrieved November 05, 2017, from <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-41743804>

Ching, F., Dr. (2017, October 18). How Xi Jinping Will Cement Himself As China's Most Powerful Leader In 25 Years. Retrieved November 05, 2017, from <https://www.forbes.com/sites/insideasia/2017/10/17/how-xi-jinping-will-cement-himself-as-chinas-most-powerful-leader-in-25-years/#cfa0bb8588d3>

<sup>42</sup> Xi Jinping delivers report to CPC congress. (2017, October 18). Retrieved November 05, 2017, from [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/19thcpcnationalcongress/2017-10/18/content\\_33398037.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/19thcpcnationalcongress/2017-10/18/content_33398037.htm)

Bisley Executive Director of La Trobe Asia and Professor of International Relations, La Trobe University, N. (2017, November 04). China's ambition burns bright – with Xi Jinping firmly in charge. Retrieved November 05, 2017, from <http://theconversation.com/chinas-ambition-burns-bright-with-xi-jinping-firmly-in-charge-86307>

<sup>43</sup> Denisov, I. (n.d.). China's Belt and Road Project: What's at Stake for Xi Jinping? Retrieved November 05, 2017, from <http://carnegie.ru/commentary/70096>

<sup>44</sup> Lifang, S. (Ed.). (2017, July 24). Interview: China's soft power accumulated in several aspects: U.S. scholar. Retrieved November 05, 2017, from [http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-07/24/c\\_136468620.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-07/24/c_136468620.htm)

<sup>45</sup> Roberts, R. (2017, July 14). Muslims in China are increasingly living under a 'police state', warn experts. Retrieved November 05, 2017, from <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/muslims-china-police-state-state-surveillance-freedom-human-rights-religious-freedom-a7841401.html>

However, it is vital to reiterate that much of this research also doesn't address recent developments in Kazakhstan and China. Changes in China, Xinjiang, and Kazakhstan provide new challenges and variations to interpreting Kazakhstani perceptions of the New Silk Road. Marlene Laruelle<sup>46</sup> recently gave a lecture on Kazakhstan Nationhood, where she argues that Kazakhstan is entering a period of "post-post Sovietness".<sup>47</sup> Demographics in KZ are shifting rapidly, where a decreasing ageing Russian ethnic group and a new, increasing urbanising Kazakh speaking group, will influence Kazakh policy in the future in unknown ways. These changes might affect commitments to the SCO<sup>48</sup> about respecting a country's sovereignty above all other considerations when contrasted with the treatment of ethnic Kazakhs in Xinjiang, and thus influencing Kazakh perceptions of the OBOR.

So while this paper can conclude that research into Kazakh perceptions into the New Silk Road is needed to understand critical regional trends, it ends with some much-needed questions for debate and discussion.<sup>49</sup>

Main question:

**What are the perceptions of different strata of Kazakhstan in relation to the New Silk Road?**

Follow up questions:

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<sup>46</sup> Laruelle, M., Dr. (2018, February 8). Kazakhstan's Nationhood: Politics and Society on the Move. Retrieved April 18, 2018, from <http://voicesoncentralasia.org/kazakhstans-nationhood-politics-and-society-on-the-move/>

<sup>47</sup> Laruelle, M., Dr. (2018, February 8). Kazakhstan's Nationhood: Politics and Society on the Move. Retrieved April 18, 2018, from <http://voicesoncentralasia.org/kazakhstans-nationhood-politics-and-society-on-the-move/>

<sup>48</sup> Peyrouse, S. (2016). Discussing China: Sinophilia and sinophobia in Central Asia. *Journal of Eurasian Studies*, 7(1), 14. doi:10.1016/j.euras.2015.10.003

<sup>49</sup> Chen, Y. (2015). A Research Note on Central Asian Perspectives on the Rise of China: The Example of Kazakhstan. *Issues & Studies*, 51(3), 82. Retrieved November 5, 2017.

- A. Is there a difference (if so in what way and with what potential influence) between Russian and Kazakh language in reporting on the New Silk Road?
- B. What is the optimal way to gain data gauging perceptions in Central Asia?
- C. If expert and public opinion in Kazakhstan is critical of Chinese policies in Xinjiang towards the ethnic Kazakh diaspora (as argued by Michael Clarke and Sebastian Peyrouse, amongst others<sup>50</sup>) does the current security situation in Xinjiang endanger the feasibility of the OBOR?<sup>51</sup>
- D. If Kazakhstan, as proposed Marlene Laurelle<sup>52</sup>, is becoming more Kazakh and less Kazakhstani, does this affect China/Kazakhstan norms and relations?

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<sup>50</sup> Peyrouse, S. (2016). Discussing China: Sinophilia and sinophobia in Central Asia. *Journal of Eurasian Studies*, 7(1), 22. doi:10.1016/j.euras.2015.10.003

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<sup>52</sup> Laruelle, M., Dr. (2018, February 8). Kazakhstan's Nationhood: Politics and Society on the Move. Retrieved April 18, 2018, from <http://voicesoncentralasia.org/kazakhstans-nationhood-politics-and-society-on-the-move/>



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