



**Kazakhstan as a
“Middle Power” in
Ensuring International
Security and
Peacekeeping:
Potential, Experience, and
Prospects**

Emin Jabbarov
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Author: Emin Jabbarov

Emin Jabbarov is an Executive Director at Think Tank HeartLand Asia, a part-time lecturer in International Security, Strategic Studies (Military security), and International Relations of the Middle East as part of the undergraduate program in international relations at NarXoz University, Almaty, Kazakhstan. His areas of interest include strategic studies (military security), international security and security in the Middle East, Central Asia and Caucasus.

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Executive Summary

The contemporary international environment is characterized by an unprecedented intensification of competition among global actors and, as a consequence, the erosion of multilateral international institutions (including the UN), which constitute the foundation of the global order.

Growing instability creates a strategic vacuum that can be filled by proactive “middle powers,” acting as mediators, bridge-builders, and guarantors of international law (states with “middle power” status are becoming critically important stabilizing elements in world politics).

In this context, the Republic of Kazakhstan, as a “middle power” (it is important to understand that this status entails responsibility), deliberately and systematically uses peacekeeping activities as a primary practical instrument for stabilizing the global situation.

At present, Kazakhstan’s policy in this direction represents a “national brand” in the foreign policy domain, aimed at converting its practical contribution into global security.

Kazakhstan’s participation in peacekeeping operations is not an isolated direction of foreign policy but is organically embedded in a broader strategy of positioning the country as an influential and responsible actor at both regional and global levels.

The analytical report consistently examines the theoretical foundations underlying “middle power” diplomacy, provides a detailed analysis of the doctrinal, institutional, and material basis of Kazakhstan’s peacekeeping potential, and also evaluates its practical experience.

It also presents proposals to expand the country’s role and influence, including the transformation of its peacekeeping potential and the promotion of initiatives for UN reform.

1. STRATEGIC FOUNDATION: DOCTRINE, DIPLOMACY AND KAZAKHSTAN’S POTENTIAL

A state’s “middle power” status is determined not by GDP indicators or military potential, but by the actions of the actor in the international arena—the style and orientation of its foreign policy.

The key attributes of such diplomacy, known as “Middle Powermanship” (a concept implying that a state seeks to pursue a course of reconciliation and act as a mediator in finding compromise between opposing countries), are the willingness to act as an intermediary, commitment to the status of a “good international citizen,” and specialization in specific areas through “niche diplomacy.”

It is important to note that these principles form the basis of Kazakhstan’s official doctrine (the Foreign Policy Concept for 2020–2030), which explicitly sets the goal of “consolidating the status of a responsible member of the international community.”

This foreign policy orientation is shaped through the Military Doctrine (2022), which defines participation in peacekeeping activities as one of the key tasks of the Armed Forces (AF) in peacetime.

Kazakhstan’s efforts to develop its peacekeeping potential are supported by sustained economic growth. Forecasts by leading international financial institutions, such as the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank (ADB), and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), indicate high GDP growth rates in 2025 and beyond, which may range from 5.3% to 5.7%. It is expected that by 2025 the country’s GDP will exceed \$310 billion. Stable economic growth constitutes the necessary material foundation that enables the state to allocate resources for the implementation of long-term and costly foreign policy projects, including the equipping and maintenance of peacekeeping contingents.

Approach	Key Criteria	Examples of Countries (illustrative)
Positional (Hierarchical)	Material resources: GDP, military expenditures, population size, geographic size. Position in the global hierarchy.	Brazil, India, Indonesia
Behavioral	Diplomatic activity: commitment to multilateralism, mediation, coalition-building, niche specialization.	Canada, Norway, Sweden

Functional (Role-based)	Role in the international system: stabilization, maintenance of order, contribution to global public goods, status of a “good international citizen.”	Australia, South Korea, Netherlands
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Foundations of Peacekeeping Potential

Kazakhstan’s strategic ambitions are supported by the targeted development of the following specific assets that shape its peacekeeping potential:

First, human capital and operational interoperability (KAZCENT)

The institutional core of Kazakhstan’s peacekeeping potential is the Peacekeeping Operations Center of the Ministry of Defense (KAZCENT) in Almaty.

KAZCENT’s international certifications from the UN (for UNSOC/UNPOC courses) and NATO (status of a Partnership Training and Education Centre, PTEC) are not merely formal achievements but strategic instruments.

Being a member of the CSTO while simultaneously hosting a center certified according to NATO standards, Kazakhstan is forming a unique кадровый potential, whose officers and soldiers become doctrinally “bilingual,” capable of effectively interacting both with forces operating under CSTO standards and with contingents from NATO countries (the synergy of two different systems creates something unique in this area).

In the context of the multinational composition of most UN missions, where

units from different military cultures must operate cohesively, such a “bridge of operational interoperability” is a rare and highly valuable asset, making Kazakh peacekeeping units particularly in demand by UN mission command.

Second. Material and technical base (utilization of the domestic defense-industrial complex)

The development of the national defense-industrial complex, in particular the company “Kazakhstan Paramount Engineering (KPE),” provides peacekeeping contingents with modern and adapted equipment.

Of particular importance is the mine-resistant ambush-protected (MRAP) vehicle “Arlan.” Its level of protection, corresponding to STANAG 4569 Level 3a/3b (withstanding the detonation equivalent of 8 kg of TNT), and its unique operating temperature range (from –50°C to +50°C) make this equipment ideally suited for operation in high-risk zones and extreme climatic conditions typical of many modern UN missions.

Third. Deployment of the Air Force component of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Kazakhstan

The acquisition and commissioning of Airbus A400M military transport aircraft, the first of which was delivered at the end of 2024, is an event that fundamentally

changes the rules of the game (delivery of the second is expected in 2026).

Airbus experts have described this acquisition as a “game changer” for Kazakhstan’s tactical and strategic airlift capabilities.

The UN force generation process is a complex logistical task, often disrupted due to a shortage of transport assets for deploying peacekeeping forces and equipment.

A troop-contributing country (TCC) capable of independently deploying its contingent and equipment (including

16-ton “Arlan” armored vehicles) to any point in the world represents the “gold standard” for the UN Department of Peace Operations (DPO). The combination of domestically produced armored equipment that meets mission requirements and its own means of strategic deployment creates a full “autonomy package” for the missions of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

This signals to the UN that Kazakhstan is not merely willing, but also a highly reliable and self-sufficient partner, which reduces logistical risks and significantly increases its chances of participating in future, more demanding missions.

Table No. 2. Activities of the Republic of Kazakhstan in Peacekeeping

Category	Key Assets and Characteristics
Legal / Doctrinal Framework	Law “On Peacekeeping Activities” (2015), Foreign Policy Concept (2020), Military Doctrine (2022)
Institutional / Training Base	Peacekeeping Operations Center KAZCENT (Almaty), certifications from IAPTC, UN, NATO (PTEC)
Material and Technical Potential	“Arlan” armored vehicle (MRAP, STANAG 3a/3b), “Alan” APC, Airbus A400M military transport aircraft
Human Resources	More than 750 personnel with UN mission experience; current deployment ~158 personnel (as of early 2025)

2. KAZAKHSTAN’S EXPERIENCE: FROM OBSERVER TO INDEPENDENT ACTOR

Kazakhstan’s path in UN peacekeeping demonstrates a well-considered, phased strategy of capacity-building, which began in 2014 with the deployment of individual military observers to Western Sahara (MINURSO), and continued with the deployment of a company in Lebanon

(UNIFIL) as part of an Indian battalion, which made it possible to gain experience operating within a larger multinational unit.

The number of Kazakh peacekeepers (158 personnel as of March 2024) remains modest on a global scale, but the trajectory of their participation indicates rapid growth and the assumption of increasing responsibility by the Republic of Kazakhstan as a “middle power.”

Table 3: Kazakhstan’s Key Contributions to UN Peacekeeping Missions

Mission	Full Name	Location	Period of Participation (start)	Max. Personnel	Key Roles
MINURSO	UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara	Western Sahara	2014	Military observers	Monitoring ceasefire
UNOCI	UN Operation in Côte d’Ivoire	Côte d’Ivoire	2014–2017	Military observers, staff officers	Monitoring, support to political process
UNIFIL	UN Interim Force in Lebanon	Lebanon	2018	Peacekeeping platoon (within Indian battalion)	Patrol, observation

MINUSCA / MINUSMA / MONUSC O	UN Missions in CAR, Mali, DR Congo	Central Africa	2024	Staff officers, military observers	Staff work in complex environments
UNDOF	UN Disengagement Observer Force	Golan Heights	2024	Independent contingent (139 personnel)	Ceasefire monitoring, patrol

Kazakhstan’s Peacekeeping Case: Golan Heights (UNDOF) as a “Proof of Concept”

The deployment of the country’s first-ever independent national contingent within the UN Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) in March 2024 became a historic milestone for the Republic of Kazakhstan.

The choice of this mission was a deeply calculated strategic decision. UNDOF, being an observation mission in a politically sensitive region, involves lower risks compared to peace enforcement operations in Africa.

This allowed Kazakhstan, in a relatively controlled environment, to test and refine the entire complex cycle of independent deployment: from negotiations with the UN Department of Peace Operations (DPO) and strategic deployment, to comprehensive in-theatre support, mandate implementation, and, critically, rotation.

The successful completion of the first year of the mission and the planned rotation of the contingent in April 2025 demonstrated the sustainability and long-term nature of Kazakhstan’s commitments.

During this year, the contingent carried out more than 600 operational tasks, including patrols, convoy escort, personnel evacuation, and explosive ordnance disposal tasks, receiving high praise from mission command.

By providing 139 personnel from the Armed Forces of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the country accounts for more than 12% of the mission’s total military personnel (1,112 personnel as of August 2025), making it one of the key actors in UNDOF.

Thus, the mission in the Golan Heights became a convincing “proof of concept,” demonstrating to the UN and the international community that Kazakhstan is a mature and reliable provider of

peacekeeping services, ready for more complex tasks.

Next Milestone for the Republic of Kazakhstan: A Strategic Roadmap for Expanding Contribution

The transition from deploying company-/battalion-level units to forming a full-fledged peacekeeping brigade represents not merely a quantitative increase, but a qualitative transformation of the country’s role in the peacekeeping system (a shift from the status of a “task executor” to that of a “mission architect” at the operational level).

According to UN force generation guidelines, a brigade is a self-sufficient structure capable of assuming responsibility for an entire sector within a large peacekeeping operation.

This implies the presence not only of 3–4 infantry battalions, but also integrated enabling units (“enablers”): a sector headquarters, an engineering company, a communications unit, a logistics battalion, a Level II field hospital, and a military police company.

A country providing such a structure becomes a “framework nation,” determining operational approaches within its area of responsibility and occupying key command positions.

The process of coordinating such a contribution with the UN Department of Peace Operations (DPO) is complex and requires lengthy negotiations, the signing of a detailed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), and multiple inspections (Pre-Deployment Visits) to confirm readiness.

Table No. 4. Vision for the Development of Kazakhstan’s Peacekeeping Potential

Stage	Timeline	Key Tasks
Stage 1: Capacity Development	2026–2028	Formation and certification of individual units according to UN standards (engineering company, medical company).
Stage 2: “Battalion+” Deployment	2029–2032	Deployment of an enhanced battalion tactical group with attached organic support units to develop integrated command capabilities.
Stage 3: Brigade Certification and Deployment	2033–2035	Conducting national and international exercises to certify the brigade. Official declaration of readiness to the UN DPO and negotiations on deployment as a sector lead nation.

New Missions, New Challenges: Focus on High-Demand Operations in Africa

A logical next step for expanding the geography of participation is Africa, where 94% of all UN peacekeepers are deployed and where needs are the most acute and in demand. Missions such as MINUSCA in the Central African Republic and MONUSCO in the Democratic Republic of the Congo constantly face shortages of critically important units.

The most effective path for Kazakhstan to increase its influence lies through “niche diplomacy”—providing not just infantry units, but those specialized capabilities that are chronically lacking within the UN system.

A well-equipped engineering battalion capable of building roads, airfields, and neutralizing improvised explosive devices (IEDs), or a Level II field hospital capable of performing emergency surgical operations, brings disproportionately greater value to a mission than an additional infantry battalion.

Such a contribution has a “multiplier effect”: it not only fills critical gaps but also provides the contributing country with significantly greater diplomatic weight and authority.

The “Arlan” armored vehicles, with their high level of mine protection, are ideally suited to counter the IED threat widespread in African missions.

Table No. 5. Vision for the Development of Kazakhstan’s Peacekeeping Potential

Critical UN Shortage	Mission Needs (MINUSCA, MONUSCO)	Kazakhstan’s Current Capacity	Recommended Plan of Action
Engineering Units	Base construction, road repair, demining, counter-IED operations	Medium	Form and equip a specialized engineer-sapper company; obtain UN certification.
Medical Units (Level II/III)	Surgical care, casualty evacuation	Medium	Upgrade mobile hospital to Level II standard; certify personnel.

Aviation (transport/combat)	Troop deployment, medical evacuation, reconnaissance	Low (helicopters)	Explore the possibility of forming and offering a helicopter unit.
Intelligence	Collection and analysis of threat information	Low/Medium	Establish a reconnaissance company equipped with tactical UAVs.
French-speaking Units	Interaction with local population and authorities	Low	Introduce intensive French language courses at KAZCENT for targeted officer training.

3. ACTIVE PARTICIPATION OF THE RK IN PEACEKEEPING AND UN REFORM

In multilateral diplomacy, practical contribution is the most “hard” currency. A country that regularly provides highly professional troops and scarce specialized units, risking the lives of its soldiers in the name of the UN Charter, gains moral authority and political weight incomparable to those who limit themselves to rhetorical statements from the podium.

A reliable reputation in peacekeeping is the foundation upon which more ambitious diplomatic initiatives are built.

In this regard, the keynote address of President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev at the 80th session of the UN General Assembly in September 2025, in which he explicitly called for “the voices of responsible ‘middle powers’ to be significantly strengthened in the Security Council,” is not merely a statement of intent, but a strategic bid for Kazakhstan’s participation in this process as one of the “middle powers” ready to assume responsibility for international stability.

This position fits perfectly into the ideology of the “Uniting for Consensus” (UfC) group, which includes countries such as Canada, Australia, South Korea, and Türkiye.

Table 6: Comparative Analysis of Contributions to Peacekeeping (2024–2025)

Country	Total Uniformed Personnel (UN)	Share in UN Peacekeeping Budget (2024–2025)	Key Niche / Focus in Peacekeeping
Kazakhstan	158 (March 2024)	n/a (not in top 10)	Growing troop contribution, independent deployment, regional training center
Canada	59 (2024)	2.63% (8th place)	Financing, political and normative leadership (gender, child protection)
Australia	~30–40 (estimated)	n/a (not in top 10)	Regional focus (Asia-Pacific), command positions
South Korea	~500–600 (estimated)	2.57% (9th place)	Engineering and medical units, technological contribution
Türkiye	147 (March 2024)	n/a (not in top 10)	UN and NATO missions, projection of regional influence

These groups of countries oppose the creation of new permanent seats in the UN Security Council (which is advocated by the “Group of Four” — G4: Brazil, Germany, India, Japan) and propose expanding the Council by increasing the number of elected, non-permanent members.

By becoming a significant and reliable provider of peacekeepers, comparable in contribution to other UfC members such as

South Korea (540 personnel) or Türkiye (147 personnel), Kazakhstan gains the opportunity to move from the role of an ordinary supporter of this position to that of an actual participant in these processes.

Kazakhstan’s real contribution to maintaining peace provides it with the moral authority to convene and lead a coalition of “middle powers” promoting a common agenda for creating a more

representative and effective UN Security Council.

Thus, peacekeeping becomes a direct instrument for strengthening Kazakhstan's global influence.

4. CHALLENGES, RISKS AND CONSTRAINING FACTORS IN STRENGTHENING STATUS

External challenges: the main external challenge for Kazakhstan is its geopolitical position at the intersection of the interests of Russia, China, and the West.

The need to constantly balance between various integration projects (the EAEU, the Belt and Road Initiative) and cooperation with Western countries creates a complex environment for maneuver and carries the risk of coming under pressure from one side.

In addition, the persistent instability in Afghanistan and potential hotspots of conflict in Central Asia require constant attention and the diversion of resources to ensure the security of national borders.

Internal factors: at the domestic level, the main constraining factors are budget allocations for defense and peacekeeping activities, which compete with social and economic priorities.

Expanding participation in overseas missions requires not only financial expenditures but also the development of broad public support, especially in the event of risks to the life and health of military personnel. Effective peacekeeping policy also depends on flawless interagency coordination between the

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Defense, and other security agencies.

Operational risks of peacekeeping missions: the environment in which modern UN missions are deployed is becoming increasingly dangerous.

Unlike traditional ceasefire monitoring missions, today peacekeepers operate in conditions of asymmetric threats, including terrorism, improvised explosive devices, and organized crime.

This requires a fundamentally different level of training, equipment (for example, mine-protected vehicles), and intelligence capabilities. Any casualties among personnel may have serious political consequences domestically and undermine support for peacekeeping activities.

5. STRATEGIC CONCLUSIONS AND MULTI-LEVEL RECOMMENDATIONS

The conducted analysis shows that the Republic of Kazakhstan has successfully completed the first stage of its strategy, establishing itself as a trustworthy, autonomous, and capable partner in UN peacekeeping activities.

The deployment of an independent contingent in the Golan Heights became a turning point, demonstrating the country's maturity as a provider of security. The next stage requires targeted and well-resourced efforts to scale and specialize its contribution in order to transition to a qualitatively new level of global influence.

Relying on its developed potential and accumulated experience, Kazakhstan has

every opportunity to occupy a unique and in-demand niche within the international peacekeeping system.

In accordance with the principles of “niche diplomacy,” the country should focus on those areas where it has comparative advantages and can offer unique competencies.

Potential niches for specialization:

1. The most promising direction is the further development of KAZCENT as a leading center for peacekeeping training for the entire Central Asia region.

By leveraging its unique UN and NATO certifications, KAZCENT can offer training programs for military personnel from neighboring countries. This will not only enhance the overall peacekeeping capacity of the region but also strengthen Kazakhstan’s role as an undisputed leader in regional security. The transformation from a simple “troop provider” into a “producer” of regional peacekeeping personnel represents a transition to a qualitatively new level of influence, ensuring long-term strategic benefits and strengthening Kazakhstan’s soft power.

2. Historically, Kazakhstan’s first peacekeeping unit was the engineer-sapper detachment “Kazbat.” Building on this experience, the country could form and offer specialized engineering contingents for UN missions. Demand for such units—capable of demining, infrastructure restoration, and camp construction in post-conflict regions—is extremely high and often exceeds supply. Such specialization would allow Kazakhstan to make a critically important and visible contribution to the peacebuilding process.

3. Kazakh military personnel and equipment, in particular the “Arlan” armored vehicles, are specifically adapted for operation in conditions of harsh winters and hot summers. This unique advantage can and should be positioned as a separate niche. Kazakhstan can offer its contingents for missions deployed in regions with extreme climates, where standard equipment and less-prepared personnel may prove ineffective.

Policy and Diplomatic-Level Recommendations (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan):

1. Leadership in the “Middle Powers” coalition.

Formally coordinate its position with the “Uniting for Consensus” group, using Kazakhstan’s growing peacekeeping authority as leverage to form and lead a broad coalition of states advocating for the reform of the UN Security Council in the interests of “middle powers.”

2. Targeted public diplomacy.

Launch an information campaign on UN platforms in New York and Geneva aimed at promoting Kazakhstan’s unique advantages: the role of KAZCENT as a “bridge of operational interoperability” and the availability of an “autonomy package” (domestic equipment + strategic deployment capability).

Military-Strategic Recommendations (Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Kazakhstan):

1. Adoption of the “Roadmap to a Brigade.”

Approve the presented “Roadmap” as an official long-term defense planning

document, ensuring the necessary multi-year budgetary funding.

More specifically, develop and adopt a long-term program (until 2035) for the formation, equipping, and training of a full-fledged peacekeeping brigade (with a strength of up to 3,000–5,000 personnel).

It is estimated that the implementation of this strategy (brigade—full brigade headquarters, logistics battalion, expanded hospital / air evacuation) will require direct capital investments from the budget in the amount of \$600–850 million by 2035, and will entail net annual operating costs estimated at \$10–15 million per deployed battalion (each battalion will require approximately 60–70 MRAP “Arlan” units, an engineering company (specialized equipment), one Level II hospital (modules, equipment), headquarters, communications, and UAV-based reconnaissance (UN standard)).

This will enable Kazakhstan not only to provide company-level contingents but also to lead entire sectors in major UN missions, independently deploying headquarters, combat units, logistics, and medical support. Achieving this goal will represent a qualitative leap in the country’s influence within the UN peacekeeping system.

2. Priority development of “niche” capabilities.

In the short term (1–2 years), concentrate resources on forming at least one highly demanded “niche” unit (an engineer-sapper company or a Level II field hospital) and proactively offer it to the UN Force Generation Service for

deployment in one of the missions in Africa.

3. Institutionalization of feedback.

Establish a permanent mechanism under which combat experience gained by contingents in missions (UNDOF and future operations) is systematically analyzed and is immediately integrated into KAZCENT training programs and the overall combat training system of the Armed Forces.

This should include an analysis of the effectiveness of equipment produced by KPE and other enterprises of Kazakhstan’s defense-industrial complex under real conditions in order to inform future modernization efforts.

4. Striving for leadership positions.

Alongside providing troops, actively nominate qualified and experienced Kazakh officers for staff and command positions in UN mission headquarters and in the UN Department of Peace Operations in New York.

This will allow a transition from the role of executor to participation in the planning and management of operations, which is an important attribute of an influential “middle power.”

The implementation of these recommendations will enable Kazakhstan not only to strengthen its status as a responsible “middle power,” but also to make an even more significant and unique contribution to maintaining international peace and security in the 21st century.

5. Expanding the geography of participation.

Examine the possibility of participating in one of the UN missions in Africa.

Participation in missions on this continent, where there is high demand for engineering and French-speaking units, will demonstrate the global reach of Kazakhstan's peacekeeping policy and provide the Armed Forces with invaluable experience in fundamentally different operational, climatic, and cultural conditions.

It is recommended to **develop and adopt an interagency "Crisis Response Package"** (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Defense) in the event of personnel losses, which should include:

- **Information strategy** — promptly issue a statement providing clarification, emphasizing the heroism of the soldiers.
- **Social guarantees** — publicly and immediately ensure maximum compensation and honors for the families of the fallen, demonstrating that the state values its defenders.

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