
CENTRAL ASIA'S DELICATE DANCE AROUND RUSSIAN SANCTIONS

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Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan are walking a geopolitical tightrope when it comes to international sanctions against Russia, striving to please both the Kremlin and the West. Kazakhstan seems to be managing the balancing act better than Kyrgyzstan.

In recent months, Kazakh and Kyrgyz leaders have engaged in rhetorical calisthenics aimed at remaining in the good graces of all parties involved in the war in Ukraine. During a late autumn visit to Germany, for example, Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev repeated earlier denials that Kazakhstan has facilitated Russian parallel-import and sanctions-evasion schemes, insisting that Astana has clearly stated that it will follow the sanctions regime. At the same time, Tokayev said Kazakhstan was not anti-Russia and valued comprehensive cooperation with Russia, with which [Kazakhstan] shares the longest border in the world.

Similarly, Kyrgyz President Sadyr Japarov has denied US accusations of sanctions-busting by his nation. There is no ground to believe so, he said in comments published by the Kabar state news agency. Russia and China do not depend on small Kyrgyzstan.

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