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in the next three issues will discuss:***

- ***Central Eurasia: Politics Today***
- ***Central Eurasia:
Religion in the Sociopolitical Context***
- ***Central Eurasia: Integration Processes***

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POLITICS TODAY

THE POST-SOVIET SPACE: PREVIOUS DEVELOPMENT AND A NEW CONFIGURATION

Sergey ZHILTSOV

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ABSTRACT

In December 1991, the political map of the world acquired newly independent states. The former Soviet republics became free to follow foreign policies based on their interests and conditioned, to a great extent, by their geographic location and integration in the production and economic context of the previous, Soviet period. The fact that the Soviet Union was replaced by newly independent states did not remove the cooperation issue from their common agenda. Indeed, the post-Soviet states could not cope, on their own, with social and economic problems piling up during the first years of their independence. Cooperation was an ob-

vious must, yet the post-Soviet republics remained undecided. The new elites that nurtured political ambitions of their own were not ready to abandon them and had no experience of bilateral and multilateral cooperation to rely on. The fast transit from socialist ideology to market economy, the changed status of the republics—from parts of a single state to independent countries—made it harder, if at all possible, to correctly assess the situation unfolding across the post-Soviet space. Certain political factors or, rather, the power struggle inside each of the post-Soviet states and their ardent desire to get rid of the Soviet heritage strongly

affected the discussion and realization of integration initiatives. This explains why integration projects seemed like a heavy burden rather than an instrument very much needed to cope with fundamental problems and why post-Soviet states failed to establish efficient multilateral cooperation.

The external factor, likewise, interfered to a great extent with post-Soviet integration: as independent states, the former Soviet republics became a zone of geopolitical and economic interests of the world's leading states that spared no effort to get access to their resources and to shape their domestic and foreign policies. The West wanted a greater role in the political sphere and stronger contacts with the new political elites. Economic interaction was widening; the post-Soviet states opened their markets to big Western businesses which did nothing good to national economy. The former Soviet republics were thus adjusted to the economic system of the West, which needed new markets and more resources; their elites had no choice but take commands from the new masters, which made integration a haphazard process in many respects.

The post-Soviet period is dotted with random and mainly failed attempts to realize

some of the integration projects, yet foreign policy aspirations and ambitions of the ruling elites widened the gap between the former Soviet republics.

On the whole, the newly independent states were fairly ambiguous in their policies and aspirations: on the one hand, in expectation of a wider cooperation with the West, the dominant foreign policy trend, the majority looked at Russia as one of the partners. On the other, integration projects remained on the agenda because of economic problems, because the former Soviet republics needed more time to finally define their national identities and because Moscow was needed as a counterbalance to the West.

Today, post-Soviet countries are united by nothing more than the geographical boundaries of the defunct state, while the political and economic processes unfolding in certain post-Soviet states do not allow us to look at the sub-regions of Central Asia, the Southern Caucasus, etc. as geopolitical units. The balance of power that has been taking shape in the last few years is strongly affected by the changed relationship between Russia and Ukraine and the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) project that triggered a reformatting of the post-Soviet space.

KEYWORDS: *Central Asia, the Southern Caucasus, the Black Sea region, the Caspian region, post-Soviet space, CIS, Eastern Partnership, Black Sea Synergy, EAEU, Eurasian integration.*

Introduction

As the Soviet Union was moving towards its end, the national elites of the Union republics spared no effort to weaken their dependence on the Center (Moscow), to tighten their grip on power and get access to industrial assets and money flows, the dreams realized by the Soviet Union's disintegration that began and ended in the historically short period of time. Its fast and unexpected withdrawal from the stage forced the newly independent states to confront many problems. The power struggle inside each of them, the fairly complicated or even conflicting relationships between former Soviet republics made the post-Soviet space a territory of contradictions and squabbles. The same political elites that had demonstrated a lot of vehemence and determination in the late 1980s when

fighting for power turned out to be unprepared to deal with political and economic transformations and address, let alone solve, the burning cultural and historical problems: they lacked experience which was very much needed in the new conditions created by the new states' economic weakness.

The post-Soviet states expected, without any reason, to build partner relations with the West which, in its turn, encouraged these unfounded expectations to impose its own agenda on them. This made it much harder to continue with integration initiatives between the former Soviet republics.

The New States: A Hard Beginning

The newly independent countries of the post-Soviet space preserved their economic and cultural ties with Russia and between themselves. There was a single ruble space and close ties between relatives; the Soviet cultural and historical heritage and the Russian language strongly affected the relationships between post-Soviet states, yet proved too weak to re-channel the political trends of the new political elites. Unlike the common people, whose living standards dropped dramatically, the elites did not need integration within the post-Soviet space that could have deprived them of their power and influence.¹

There was a wide gap between their ambitions and the potentials of national economies. It was in the first post-Soviet year that the economic insolvency of the newly independent states became abundantly clear. The national economic complex inherited from the Soviet Union made it hard, if at all possible, to promptly restructure post-Soviet economics and re-orientate foreign economic ties. Power struggle and political upheavals, decline of national economies, accompanied by the degradation of the social sphere, armed conflicts and unregulated border issues, made at least relative stability absolutely indispensable. This explains an outburst of interest in integration projects of the early 1990s. Their discussion and realization, however, revealed that the national elites were on guard, to say the least, and that there was no consensus between them. They suspected Russia of intending to restore the "Soviet empire" even if political interaction never surfaced on the agenda. Driven by two conflicting factors—economic problems to be addressed and the desire to remain in power—the elites never risked to fully realize the integration initiatives. This means that involvement in these projects was not voluntary; it was needed to maintain political and economic stability.

From the very beginning, the newly independent states demonstrated two foreign policy trends. Some of them—Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Moldova—did not support the idea of integration alliances; in their eagerness to consolidate their foreign economic ties with the European countries, the U.S. and China, they tried to weaken their economic relationships with Russia, a result of stronger pro-Western positions of the new political elites.

Another group of states—Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Armenia, as well as certain Central Asian states—did not reject the idea of economic integration based on new principles; they wanted to preserve their industrial capacity to address their social and economic problems.

The fact that the Commonwealth of Independent States was set up meant that the republican elites were prepared to legalize their power and to shake off control of the Union center. They no longer needed a common space, which inevitably ended in the disintegration of the post-Soviet space into sub-regions of Central Asia, the Southern Caucasus, the Black Sea and Caspian regions along their geographic boundaries, in line with similar economies and the nature of cooperation within the

¹ See: Zh. Toshchenko, *Postsovetskoe prostranstvo: suverenizatsia i integratsia*, Nauka, Moscow, 1997, p. 65.

Soviet Union. As could be expected, with no experience of solving inter-state disagreements and no new mechanisms of dealing with the regional problems, the relationships inside these sub-regions were far from simple. In Central Asia, water and energy conflicts fly high; the Southern Caucasus, likewise, has its share of conflict potential; it was difficult to arrive at an agreement on the new international legal status of the Caspian.

The Role of Western States

Extra-regional countries strongly affected the post-Soviet integration initiatives. Late in the 1980s, rivalry between the U.S.S.R. and the West (the U.S. and the EU) became even more vehement. While the Soviet Union was still alive, Washington demonstrated a serious interest in the Soviet republics; it established contacts with informal movements and opposition politicians, whom it encouraged through financial, technical and political assistance.

Having supported internal changes in the Soviet Union, the George Bush administration (1989-1993) achieved its main aim of removing its geopolitical rival from the scene. The Soviet Union fell apart into independent states burdened with mutual claims and political ambitions of their elites, which gave the West a chance to promote its interests in the former Soviet territory.

The West pursued a selective foreign policy in the post-Soviet space and addressed the clearly outlined tasks rooted in its assessment of the historical place of each of the former Soviet republics. It was a highly justified approach, since the republics could not compete with the developed countries: they lacked political weight, economic potential and the experience in independent policies inside and outside their borders.

The West made the first step: it recognized the newly independent states and established diplomatic relations with them, as well as raised the level of political and economic cooperation as the foundation of new trade and economic relations. The West relied on international financial structures that somewhat revived the economies of post-Soviet states by recompensing the losses caused by the ruptured economic relations with Russia. The West also relied on all sorts of political instruments. In December 1991, the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC) was set up followed by the Partnership for Peace program launched in 1994.

At first, the West, being convinced, and with good reason, that the post-Soviet states were acting under Russia's influence, closely followed the processes unfolding in the former Soviet territory. Several years later, when the West discovered that Russia remained fairly passive for subjective and objective reasons, while the post-Soviet states were seeking contacts with extra-regional states, it became more active when identifying and pursuing its long-term aims. The United States and the European Union wanted, in particular, to keep the post-Soviet states disunited to prevent the re-integration of the former republics, which meant that Russia should be treated as one of them – no more, no less. This was all the more important because some of the post-Soviet states wanted to preserve cultural ties inherited from the past, contacts between relatives and establish partner relationships with Moscow. Others, in an effort to consolidate their statehoods and acquire a national identity, lowered the level of their cooperation with Russia in all spheres.

The American policy and the situation in the post-Soviet space changed when Bill Clinton was elected President in 1993. The West became much more aware of the importance of the post-Soviet states for the consolidation of the U.S. geopolitical positions and dealing with its economic problems. This explains America's and the EU's increased attention to their political and economic relations with the newly independent states and their deliberate moving away from their unquestioned support of Russia. The Russian political elite, in its turn, developed a more critical attitude to the situation in

which Russia found itself after the Soviet Union's disintegration. Stronger negative assessments of the geopolitical changes and the repercussions of disintegration were accompanied by a growing desire to restore economic and political relations with the former republics. This was reflected in the Foreign Policy Concept of the RF adopted in 1993, which described the post-Soviet space as one of the foreign policy priorities. The Russian leaders, who had recognized the independence of the former national outskirts and paid a lot of attention to economic issues, tried to exclude the influence of third powers on the CIS.²

The West did not miss the U-turn in Russia's foreign policy priorities. The United States, and later the EU, changed their assessments of Russia's foreign policy. Criticism of Russia was growing more and more vehement: it was accused of formulating its foreign policy priorities in the post-Soviet space and of pursuing an active policy in the former Soviet republics. In fact, the West was concerned with Russia's intention to consolidate the post-Soviet space, widen the sphere of integration and cooperation in line with the Eurasian ideas. The West, which was determined to oppose reintegration of the post-Soviet states and Russia's key role in the process, proceeded from the need to ensure its own security.³

Russia, determined to restore at least part of its lost positions in the post-Soviet space, was driven by economic considerations. The West, unable to accept this, poured more efforts into promoting its interests in the same territory. The United States and the European Union did not limit themselves to the political support of the leaders of newly independent states and their efforts to reorientate the foreign policy of their countries; they increased their economic assistance on a bilateral basis and through international financial institutions. Anti-Russian rhetoric changed accordingly: Russia was accused of "imperialist" intentions; some of the post-Soviet leaders, determined to remain in power at all costs, used these arguments in their bilateral relations with Moscow to justify their pro-Western course and social and economic failures.

Russia-the U.S.: Struggle in the Post-Soviet Space

By the mid-1990s, the post-Soviet states had already passed the first stage of their independent development. The results of the Soviet Union's disintegration were confirmed, to a great extent, by foreign policies of its former republics: their elites proved to be inconsistent in their policies abroad and unable to cope with social and economic problems at home. The West managed to impose its anti-Russian foreign policies on them mainly because their ideas of the world were pretty vague. Post-Soviet leaders perceived Western involvement in the region as a chance to oppose Russia's influence and consolidate their positions.

The developments in the post-Soviet space and the future of integration projects were strongly affected by the political changes unfolding in most of the newly independent states. The parliamentary and presidential elections of 1992-1994 brought pro-Western elites to power; some of them, however, were ready to accept close trade and economic relations with Russia and to preserve political contacts to a certain extent. Other elite groups preferred to weaken Russia's influence in their countries. On the whole, in the majority of the post-Soviet states those political forces that insisted on reintegration or restoration of the ruptured economic ties were defeated. The United States and its

² See: D.V. Trenin, "Rossia i strany SNG: 'vzroslenie' otnosheniy," in: *Vneshniaia politika Rossii: 2000-2020*, Russian Council for International Affairs, Vol. 1, ed. by I.S. Ivanov, Aspekt Press, Moscow, 2012, p. 210.

³ See: O.V. Prikhodko, "Amerikanskaia politika v otnoshenii Ukrainy," *Obozrevatel*, No. 10, 2016, pp. 43-61.

Western allies abandoned their course at closer relations with Russia in favor of stronger political and economic support of former Soviet republics.⁴

The complex relations between Russia and Ukraine were one of the key factors of post-Soviet policies: the division of the Black Sea fleet, Kiev's mounting gas debts, different or even opposite positions on a wide range of problems within the CIS and stronger positions of Ukrainian nationalists did nothing good to the relationships between former Soviet republics.

The U.S. and the EU used this chance to specify their aims and priorities in the post-Soviet space and their approaches to each of the republics. In the spring of 1995, U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher defined one of his country's foreign policy priorities to be the support of independence of Russia's neighbors. America was determined to concentrate on Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan, two countries rich in hydrocarbons. World powers spared no effort to engage in exploration, extraction and export of oil and gas from the Central Asian and Caspian regions.⁵ Caspian hydrocarbons were attractive and still "novel dishes."⁶

This should not be taken to mean that the West ignored the other newly independent states. The United States, the European Union and China were gradually consolidating their positions in Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, as well as the Central Asian and South Caucasian countries. Unlike Beijing that concentrated on trade and economic cooperation, the West was apparently interested in the political processes; it encouraged the local elites to sever their relations with Russia up to complete fragmentation of the post-Soviet space and planted unrealistic expectations in post-Soviet leaders of a rightful place in world politics for their countries and partner relationships with the world's leaders.

Cautious policy in the post-Soviet space became a thing of the past. The West established closer contacts with post-Soviet political elites eager to move closer to the West and farther away from Russia. On the whole, the West needed the disintegrated post-Soviet space, which was no longer kept together by economic ties, as markets for Western goods and alternative sources of power.⁷

The West capitalized on Russia's inability to realize its integration projects across the post-Soviet space. Despite the signed agreements and summits, post-Soviet states never moved far enough in their efforts to tune up new political and economic relations: the new leaders refused to take the interests of their neighbors into account and looked at the West as a desirable and promising partner. In the latter half of the 1990s, this and specified long-term interests shifted the accents in Western foreign policy. Economic problems, however, did not allow the post-Soviet states to cut off all contacts with the neighbors: they had to look for and find new variants of cooperation. The expected Western aid, on which post-Soviet states had pinned their hopes, turned out to be too small to address anything but the most urgent economic problems. On the whole, the economic situation in all countries remained fairly complicated, while Russia, which proceeded from its geopolitical considerations and economic requirements, insisted that trade and economic relations between post-Soviet states should be preserved and even widened. It partly succeeded: in 1995, Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan set up a Customs Union, which Kyrgyzstan joined in 1996 and Tajikistan—in 1999. Its members removed all tariffs and quota restrictions among themselves, agreed on customs tariffs on imported goods and signed an agreement on a Common Economic Space.⁸ This created potentials for much

⁴ See: V. Shorokhov, *Neft i politika Azerbaidzhana. Issledovanie TsMI-MGIMO*, Moscow, 1997, p. 31.

⁵ See: Yo. Tianle, "Rol Tsentralnoy Azii v energeticheskoy strategii Kitaia," in: *Tsentralnaia Azia: problemy i perspektivy (vzgliad iz Rossii i Kitaia)*, Collection of articles, ed. by K.A. Kokorev, D.A. Alexandrov, I.Iu. Frolova, Russian Institute of Strategic Studies; Chinese Academy of Contemporary International Relations, RISI, Moscow, 2013, p. 145.

⁶ I. S. Zonn, *Kaspiy: illiuzii i realnost*, Edel-M, Moscow, 1999, 467 pp.

⁷ See: *Evrazia v poiskakh identichnosti*, ed. by S.P. Glinkin, L.Z. Zevin, Nestor-Istoria, Moscow, St. Petersburg, 2011, pp. 67-93.

⁸ See: G. Melikian, *Armenia i Evraziyskiy soiuz: ot sotrudnichestva do integratsii*, Erevan, 2015, p. 4.

wider cooperation that, on the whole, remained untapped because of continued regionalization of the post-Soviet space, due to the efforts of the U.S. and the EU to tighten their grip on the post-Soviet space through, in particular, greater independence of the Central Asian countries.⁹ The same can be said about the Southern Caucasus, where Washington intended to carry out its own policy.¹⁰ In the latter half of the 1990s, America revised its Caspian policies.¹¹ The United States became much more interested in the post-Soviet states; it relied on all sorts of instruments to consolidate its political and economic influence, disrupt integration projects and interfere in regional problems.

Reformatting the Post-Soviet Space

Everything changed when Vladimir Putin came to power in 2000. From that time on, Russia became much more determined to promote its integration projects that, if realized, could have consolidated its positions and restore its influence on part of the former Soviet territory. There was no other alternative: Moscow felt constrained by economic, political and cultural rivalry of other countries and power centers, the U.S. being one of them.¹²

Moscow turned its attention to Belarus and Kazakhstan as the most industrially developed post-Soviet countries and tried hard and failed to preserve trade and economic relations with Ukraine that was gradually drifting towards the West.

This was to be expected: in the 2000s, the West initiated several long-term projects, including Eastern Partnership, the Black Sea Synergy and Greater Central Asia. The European Union created an associated partnership format designed to change the balance of power in the post-Soviet regions.

On the whole, in the early 2010s the relationship between Russia and the West were going from bad to worse because of their fundamentally different interests in the post-Soviet space: the U.S. and the EU were crowding Russia out of the post-Soviet countries.¹³ Russia, in turn, tried hard to consolidate its influence in the post-Soviet space to resolve its economic problems, while the West needed weak and manageable states as a “sanitary cordon” around Russia.

In the last five years, the post-Soviet space has been living amid fundamental changes that coincided with the ongoing transformation of the world order. On the one hand, some of the post-Soviet states support integration projects to widen cooperation within the post-Soviet space; others stake on long-term relationships with the West and reject wider cooperation with former Soviet republics as an obstacle that interferes with their foreign policy strategies.

So far, the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) of Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan and Armenia remains the most successful integration project. An agreement that had been signed in 2014 and its realization in 2015 became possible because several post-Soviet countries wanted to deepen their multilateral cooperation. The difficult situation in industrial production, few chances to establish and develop equal trade and economic relationships with the West forced these post-Soviet states to es-

⁹ See: A.A. Kazantsev, “Politika SShA v postsovetsoy Tsentralnoy Azii: kharakter i perspektivy,” *Vestnik MGIMO Universiteta*, No. 4, 2012, pp. 155-164.

¹⁰ See: S.A. Mikhaylov, “Otnoshenia Gruzii i SShA,” in: *Gruzia: problemy i perspektivy razvitiya*, in 2 vols., Vol. 1, Russian Institute of Strategic Studies, Moscow, 2001, p. 202.

¹¹ See: K.S. Gadzhiev, *Bolshaya igra na Kavkaze. Vchera. Segodnia, Zavtra*, Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniya, Moscow, 2012, p. 169.

¹² See: V.D. Trenin, op. cit., p. 216.

¹³ See: M.T. Laumulin, “Perspektivy amerikanskogo prisutstviya v Tsenralnoy Azii,” *Kazakhstan-Spektr*, No. 3, 2012, pp.16-32.

establish closer cooperation with their neighbors. The same fully applied to foreign policy factors created by extra-regional states in the first place.

Kazakhstan and Belarus joined the Eurasian integration project in search of an optimal combination of their potentials and assessments of economic problems. As EAEU members, they have already acquired access to the Russian market and additional financial resources; both countries are very much concerned with the problems of trade and economic cooperation. Indeed, Belarus has no choice but to integrate with the post-Soviet countries because its economy strongly depends on the economy of its eastern neighbor.¹⁴ Over half of its foreign trade turnover is ensured by Russia, while a quarter of banking assets is controlled by Russian financial groups.¹⁵ The same fully applies to Kazakhstan. Astana needs access to the Russian market of capital and goods to lower its dependence on the outstripping development of the oil and gas sector and on raw material exports; it needs sustainable relations with its Eurasian partners in order to find new markets for its goods.¹⁶ Belarus, likewise, expects to bring its products to the Russian market and to acquire important resources at Russian prices.

Bishkek and Erevan have revised their approaches to integration. In the early 2000s, they had been widening their cooperation with the U.S. and the EU through political contacts and programs offered by their Western partners. In 2006, Armenia and the EU had confirmed a five-year Plan of Cooperation; later Armenia became involved in the Eastern Partnership program started by the May 2009 EU summit. Involved in association talks, Armenia retreated when it became clear that wider cooperation with European countries would interfere with its close relationship with Russia. In September 2013, Erevan announced that it was ready to join the Customs Union: it depended, to a great extent, on Russia's investments and needed the Russian market for its goods. Security was no less important: Armenia uses Russian military equipment and relies on its political support in the context of the still unresolved conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh.

In December 2013, Erevan had adopted a general roadmap of joining the Customs Union and the Common Economic Space of Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan; in January 2014, the Government of Armenia approved a detailed plan; in October of the same year, the Treaty of Accession of the Republic of Armenia to the Treaty on the Eurasian Economic Union of 29 May 2014 was signed.

For a long time, the Kyrgyzstan elites could not arrive at a final conclusion on the country's accession to the Treaty. On the one hand, the labor migration of local population to Russia was huge: the money earned there helped fill the budget and maintain social and economic stability; Russia's economic assistance was also taken into account. On the other, the relationship with China that realized infrastructural projects within the republic was deepening. On 23 December, 2014, Kyrgyzstan had decided to join the EAEU; on 12 August, 2015, the accession treaty was ratified. This means that both republics looked at Eurasian integration through the prism of their economic problems and their geopolitical interests.¹⁷

On the whole, EAEU membership, which means unified legislation, macroeconomic policies, technical regulation, monopoly tariffs, etc. will provide more opportunities to the member countries. It is expected that Eurasian integration will develop through unified cooperation chains between enterprises of the member countries and that trade will no longer be dominated by raw materials.¹⁸ Un-

¹⁴ See: A.V. Shurubovich, "Evraziyskaia integratsia v vospriiatii belorussov," *Rossia i novye gosudarstva Evrazii*, No. 1, 2014, pp. 9-25.

¹⁵ See: E.M. Kuzmina, "Evraziyskiy ekonomicheskiy soiuz: ispytanie krizisom," *Problemy postsovetskogo prostranstva*, No. 1, 2015, p. 12.

¹⁶ See: A.A. Bashmakov, *Ot prigranichnogo sotrudnichestva k evraziyskoy ekonomicheskoy integratsii*, Collection of scholarly works, KISI under the President of the RK, Almaty, 2013, pp. 182-189.

¹⁷ See: M.A. Neymark, "Russkiy mir i geopolitika," *Problemy postsovetskogo prostranstva*, No. 2 (4), 2015, pp. 78-100.

¹⁸ See: I. Lis, "Maksimalnyy effekt ot integratsii," *Delovoy Kazakhstan*, 27 March, 2015, p. 1.

able to cope with economic and social problems on their own, the member countries have no choice but to look for new forms of cooperation in large infrastructural projects, which require more money than any country can provide on its own; their economic problems are caused, in particular, by the fact that their industries still rely on obsolete Soviet equipment.¹⁹ These countries need more markets for their products and a wider trade and economic cooperation.

The West was very much concerned by Russia's determination to realize its integration projects and to set up an efficient EAEU: it may reintegrate at least part of the Soviet territory and expand its sphere of influence.²⁰

China is also worried. Back in 2014, experts from Kazakhstan pointed out that the Customs Union and the Common Economic Space and the future Eurasian Economic Union will limit China's ambitious plans in the post-Soviet space as a whole, and in Central Asia in particular.²¹ The Customs Union may change the economic conditions on which China now operates in Central Asia: its members will acquire privileges, which will confront Chinese enterprises with much harsher conditions for regional investments.²²

Conclusion

In the last few decades, regionalization of the post-Soviet space has become even more obvious. Today, a group of states that treats wider cooperation with the West as a priority has emerged. In fact, the gap between former Soviet republics is widening under pressure of new economic contacts, stronger influence of extra-regional states and the less than favorable circumstances under which integration projects are realized. At the same time, trade, economic and political relations with Russia are treated as an important, but not the key, development factor.

Relationships between individual states with the main external economic and foreign policy partners will depend on the future of the post-Soviet space; likewise, much will depend on the integration within the EAEU and the dynamics of "European integration" based on association agreements with some of the post-Soviet countries.²³

The United States and the European Union will strongly affect the processes unfolding in the post-Soviet space; they will use some of the post-Soviet states (that will disentangle themselves from Russia's sphere of influence) as a sanitary cordon. Washington and Brussels are consolidating their positions in the post-Soviet space, which they have defined as a strategically important region indispensable for the successful solution of their political, economic and energy problems. No wonder that the West is negatively disposed to the setting up, let alone, the implementation of the EAEU.²⁴ Back in December 2012, when Russia was discussing its first specific steps towards Eurasian integration, Hillary Clinton, the then Secretary of State announced in Dublin: "We know what the goal is and we

¹⁹ See: A.V. Shurubovich, "Innovatsionnoe sotrudnichestvo kak faktor modernizatsii natsionalnykh ekonomik stran Evraziyskogo ekonomicheskogo soiuza," *Problemy postsovetskogo prostranstva*, No. 1, 2015, pp. 17-35.

²⁰ See: Li Xing, Wang Chenxing, "Kitayskaia politologia o smysle i perspektivakh evraziyskogo soiuza," *Mezhdunarodnye protsessy*, No. 38, 2014, p. 72.

²¹ See: K.L. Syroezhkin, "Uglublenie vsestoronnego strategicheskogo sotrudnichestva Respubliki Kazakhstan s Kitayskoy narodnoy respublikoy," in: *Kontseptsia vneshney politiki Respubliki Kazakhstan na 2014-220 gody i zadachi po ee realizatsii: materialy kruglogo stola*, ed. by B.K. Sultanov, KISI under the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Almaty, 2014, pp. 54-60.

²² See: Wang Shuchun, Wen Qingsung, "Perspektivy evraziyskogo integratsionnogo proekta i ego posledstviia dlia Kitaia," *Obozrevatel*, No. 4, 2013, pp. 41-56.

²³ See: N.A. Mendkovich, *Na puti k evraziyskomu ekonomicheskomu chudu. Rossia i integratsia na postsovetskom prostranstve*, Algoritm, Moscow, 2015, p. 207.

²⁴ See: Wang Shuchun, Wen Qingsung, op. cit., p. 48.

are trying to figure out effective ways to slow down or prevent it.”²⁵ Beijing is of a more or less similar opinion: this integration project is seen as a challenge comparable to the Soviet Union’s challenge.²⁶

The West tries to prevent deeper integration represented by the Eurasian Economic Union and to set up an alternative power center in the post-Soviet space, in which Ukraine will play the leading role. This supplied the context in which the West assesses the events in Ukraine and its worsening relations with Russia. In fact, this is one of the instruments the U.S. is using to breach the process and lower the level of cooperation between Russia and post-Soviet states.

Generally, the West has armed itself with a set of varied political instruments. The fact that there are countries with pro-Western political regimes (Georgia, Azerbaijan, Moldova and Ukraine) makes it much easier to oppose integration projects. It pours money in to help the elites in power preserve relative social and economic stability in these countries and camouflage their inadequacy.

The West has managed to reformat the post-Soviet space: some of the newly independent states have re-orientated their foreign policy to maximally distance themselves from Russia. In the future, the United States will work even harder; it will rely on regime change in the countries that want to side with Russia or on their destabilization and disintegration.²⁷ The instruments at its disposal are varied: funding of opposition by international organizations, putting pressure on national elites, active opposition to new export routes for Russian gas and a greatly increased interest in establishing alternative regional organizations. In 2017, GUAM was revived; there are plans to set up a Baltic-Black Sea Organization. NATO has not abandoned its efforts to draw post-Soviet states into the sphere of its interests. American presence in Central Asia and the facilities ran by NATO members scattered across the region have allowed the West to cover it with a net of military infrastructure.²⁸

The policy of anti-Russian sanctions is a long-term one. The sanctions introduced by the United States against Russia in March 2014 can be described as a logical outcome of contradictions between the two countries: Washington was obviously concerned about Russia’s efforts to implement the EAEU which, in the future, may have consolidated Russia’s positions in the post-Soviet space; it was deeply involved in the struggle for the European gas market where the post-Soviet states are also involved. “On 26 March, 2014, at the U.S.-EU Summit in Brussels, Barack Obama assured EU leaders that Europe would get as much American gas as it needed.”²⁹ Later Sergey Naryshkin, head of the Foreign Intelligence Service of the Russian Federation, pointed out that the United States intended to widen the anti-Russian sanctions and was determined to wage economic warfare against it. There are attempts to cut short the supplies of Russian hydrocarbons to Europe.³⁰

The future of the post-Soviet space is connected with the EAEU, which will allow its members to stabilize the economic situation and, later, modernize and re-industrialize their economies. Much will depend on Russia and its policy. Today its cooperation with post-Soviet states is seen as a critical condition of its own development, of defusing, to an extent, the construction of a sanitary cordon along its borders, which may limit its potential influence in the post-Soviet space. The West needs

²⁵ “Clinton Calls Eurasian Integration an Effort To ‘Re-Sovietize’,” available at [<https://www.rferl.org/a/clinton-calls-eurasian-integration-effort-to-resovietize/24791921.html>], 29 July, 2016.

²⁶ See: K.L. Syroezhkin, “Evraziyskoe prostranstvo i kitayskiy factor,” in: *Integratsionnye protsessy v evraziyskom prostranstve i sovremennyy mir: Materialy mezhdunarodnoy nauchno-prakticheskoy konferentsii (Almaty, 14 noiabria, 2012 g.)*, KISI under the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2013, p. 156.

²⁷ See: G.G. Tishchenko, V.E. Novikov, S.M. Ermakov, I.A. Nikolaychuk, V.V. Koriakin, Iu.A. Kriachkina, Ia.V. Selianin, “Voennaia politika SShA i ugrozy Rossii,” *Problemy natsionalnoy strategii*, No. 6, 2014, p. 18.

²⁸ See: D.S. Popov, *Tsentralnaia Azia vo vneshney politike SShA 1991-2016*, RISI, Moscow, 2016, p. 57.

²⁹ D. Grushevenko, S. Melnikova, “Political Geology Hastens to Redraw the Global Energy Map in Favor of the U.S.,” *Russia in Global Affairs*, Vol. 12, No. 2, 2014.

³⁰ See: O. Nikiforov, “Sostoitsia li proekt ‘Severnogo potoka-2’,” *Nezavisimaia gazeta*, 11 June, 2017.

new mechanisms to pull the post-Soviet states out of the sphere of Russia's geopolitical and geo-economic influence and limit its capabilities of implementing integration projects.³¹

³¹ See: T.S. Guzenkova, O.V. Petrovskaya, V.B. Kashirina, O.B. Nemensky, V.A. Ivanova, K.I. Tasits, D.A. Alexandrov, I.A. Ippolitov, S.Iu. Kukola, R.V. Darvay, S.V. Tikhonova, "Politika Evrosiuza v otnoshenii stran postsovetского prostranstva v kontekste evrasiyskoy integratsii," *Problemy natsionalnoy strategii*, No. 2, 2015, pp. 9-51.

CHINA'S SOFT POWER METHODS APPLIED IN CENTRAL ASIAN COUNTRIES (THE CASE OF KAZAKHSTAN)

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, China began assuming a more active stance on the international arena, in particular, by using soft power methods. The application of such methods is especially apparent in the politics pursued by Xi Jinping. China's foreign policy during his leadership is characterized by the combination of hardline and soft methods. The growth of China's soft power methods is partly determined by the strong interest of Western researchers in China's current projects and initiatives. Following the launch of the Belt and Road Initiative, the interest in the China's successful economic development model has significantly increased.

In this paper, the authors attempted to analyze China's soft power methods applied in Kazakhstan. China possesses a set of soft power instruments that allow it to exert a degree of influence over Central Asian countries, including Kazakhstan. The main components of PRC's soft power foreign policy in Kazakhstan are culture and education. The first component is based on the familiarization and further popularization of Chinese culture and its achievements in the Kazakhstan society. The second aims to strengthen the ties between the two countries in the sphere of humanities, in particular, via the development of bilateral scientific

and educational programs and the expanded accessibility of Chinese educational grants. Both components are implemented in Chinese foreign policy in Kazakhstan as two independent vectors. Meanwhile, there are Confucius Institutes that function in Kazakhstan and combine the cultural and edu-

cational components in their activities. It is also important to note that one of the strongest sides of China's soft power policy in the Republic of Kazakhstan is the image of economic success, which attracts the entire international community, and, as the result, draws in a huge influx of investments.

KEYWORDS: *China, Kazakhstan, soft power policy, investment policy, educational collaboration, Confucius Institute.*

Introduction

The Central Asian region is traditionally very significant for China. This fact is determined by the requirements of national and energy security, established economic ties, the aim to expand political influence and the implementation of a number of integrative projects in the region. China's growing interest in Central Asia is easily understandable. It can be explained by the increase of this region's importance in international politics and economy; along with growing threats and challenges there are new opportunities and prospects that open up here. The key element of China's foreign policy in Central Asia is the economic infiltration of the region via the implementation of bilateral and multilateral economic and infrastructural projects.¹

The value of Central Asia for PRC is determined by other factors, such as the presence of selling markets, ore mineral reserves, development of transportation projects, etc. In September 2013, during his visit to Astana, the Chairman of PRC Xi Jinping articulated the idea of the Silk Road Economic Belt, aimed at the economic development of the countries located along the transportation corridors between China and Europe. Along with the idea of the 21st Century Marine Silk Belt, which runs in the direction of Africa and the Middle East, it comprises the Belt and Road Initiative, which has become a significant direction of the PRC's foreign policy. The countries embraced by these initiatives have become some of the key targets of China's soft power.

It is also significant to point out that China is changing swiftly and in multiple ways. PCR is placing a lot of effort into not being perceived as a threat. In the near future, numerous states will face a sharp expansion of China's influence in many regions of the world. The Chinese education system will also deliver its benefits in the coming years, as many thousands of students who receive an education in the PRC will have an opportunity to immerse in its culture in a more profound manner. This implies that, having become one of the most important players in contemporary world order, China cannot but develop such an important component of its politics as soft power, and that is precisely why it is so relevant today.

Research Methods

Joseph Nye's concept of soft power forms the theoretical concept of this research. The authors correlate the content of the concept with practices adopted by the Chinese authorities with the aim of

¹ See: S.G. Luzianin, "Tsentralnaia Azia: izmerenie bezopasnosti i sotrudnichestva", available at [<http://goo.gl/yvAAOE>], 27 April, 2018.

promoting the country's interests in Kazakhstan. In order to analyze the Chinese soft power approaches and justify the conclusions, the authors examined the discourse in the official speeches of the CPC leaders, using the traditional source research methods. Historical, statistical and comparative research methods were also used, which allowed to recreate an integrated image of China's soft power policy mechanisms in Kazakhstan.

The Concept of Soft Power in International Relations: Theoretical Aspect

The concept of soft power has managed to gain great popularity in a short time in the contemporary international relations theory. Introduced into scientific discourse in the 1990s by Joseph Nye, the concept of soft power is currently a relevant discussion topic and the focus of scientific research and analysis by international experts, appearing in official documents that determine the foreign policy of various states.

According to Nye, "the essence of soft power is an actor's persuasiveness and attraction. In other words, states, and even nonstate actors, pursue soft power to burnish their image and to shape the policy preferences and outlooks of other states through persuasion and attraction rather than coercion, so that they are more in line with or have a favorable view of the rising power. This quest for legitimacy, leadership, and authority is what drives states to pursue power politics through nonmilitary inducements and approaches."²

The concept of soft power, formulated in the West, is reflected in the foreign policy of Eastern states. This idea and the opportunities and prospects its use offers for securing national interests is actively discussed in political and academic circles of the majority of Eastern countries.³ PRC's political elite talks about the concept of soft power increasingly more often. Wang Yiwei, an ex-employee of the PRC's mission in the EU, had reasonably noted that "few ideas from the Western international relations theories have managed to penetrate Chinese rhetoric so deeply and widely in recent years."⁴

Nye's statement regarding the universal nature of his theory and its correspondence to the interests of any country, group or individual may be contradicted by the diversity of "national" approaches and the soft power strategies of Eastern countries, which are increasingly more active in seeking the competitive attractiveness contest. The analysis of this struggle, which is gaining power according to a number of experts, allows to expose the emergence of strategies with explicitly apparent national specifics of certain countries that add to and modernize the initial idea, rather than one universal concept.⁵

Most notably, this is linked to the fact that the majority of Eastern countries has perceived the concept of soft power as an orientation cue that referenced their own resources, which went unnoticed or was not properly used in the past, rather than an external concept with Western origins. For instance, in China the origins of soft power were discovered in Confucian values, the ideas of subjugat-

² Chin-Hao Huang, *China's Soft Power in East Asia*, The National Bureau of Asian Research, 2013, pp. 5-6.

³ See: S.K. Pevtsov, A.M. Bobylo, L.R. Rustamova, "Miagkaia sila" v Aziatskom-Tikhoookeanskom regionalnom kontekste. *Teoreticheskaia adaptatsia i natsionalnye praktiki*, Monograph, Far Eastern Federal University, Vladivostok, 2016, p. 4.

⁴ S. Breslin, "The Soft Notion of China's 'Soft Power'," *Asia Programme Paper*, 2011, p. 8.

⁵ See: Yee-Kuang Heng, "Mirror, Mirror on the Wall. Who is the Softest of Them All? Evaluating Japanese and Chinese Strategies in the 'Soft Power' Competition Era," *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific*, Vol. 10, Issue 2, 2010, p. 290.

ing an enemy without a struggle. Thus, it is apparently reasonable to consider the ideas of soft power in ancient Chinese political thought.

China's Soft Power Political Methods in Kazakhstan

Although Nye's concept has shaped up only by the end of the 20th century, Chinese policy of soft power has always been present in the PRC's foreign policy in various forms, from the assistance of other nations' assimilation to religious leverage. Meanwhile, the philosophy of combining soft and hard power had existed from time immemorial, thus it is erroneous to assume that such an approach is a novel one. In fact, the impulse for using China's soft power in was provided by the address of China's President Hu Jintao at the 17th All-China Communist Party Congress in October 2007. "We must ... use cultural expansion as the component of our country's soft power in order to ensure people's main cultural rights and interests, to enrich the cultural life of the Chinese society and inspire enthusiasm in people for the sake of progress," he said at that time. This phrase became the reference point for China's strategy to improve its position outside the country.⁶

It is precisely with Hu Jintao's rise to power, for the first time since the establishment of the PRC, that China began paying this much attention to soft power. It is under the leadership of Hu Jintao, who was known for soft, harmonious foreign policy strategy, that new accents related to the use of traditional instruments of soft power have emerged in Chinese foreign policy and the work on the formation of a positive image of China abroad has focused on new details. PRC's foreign policy course was focused on the support of peace declarations, denunciation of the unipolar world order and politics from the position of strength. It was during the very same period that such new initiatives as "public diplomacy" and "peripheral diplomacy" have emerged in China. In addition, PCR's administration had come up with a number of foreign policy programs aimed at enlisting the support of the international community, propagating the idea of China's peaceful development path. The Chinese authorities are currently investing a lot of effort in implementing efficient soft power policy. The main areas of realizing such policies in PRC's foreign policy concept are the Asia-Pacific Region, Africa, Latin America and Central Asia.

As early as in October 2011, the document under the name of Decision of the CPC Central Committee on Certain Major Issues on Deepening Cultural System Reform and Promoting the Great Development and Great Prosperity of Socialist Culture was adopted. It contained the discussion of the growing significance of soft power in interstate competition, as well as the need to "implement the strategy of externalizing the culture, increase the international influence of Chinese culture, and demonstrate the new image of China's reforms and openness to the world."⁷

Just as in the rest of the world, the "successful economic model" component has great significance in Kazakhstan. Kazakhstan is a relatively young state that actively aims to embrace other countries' experience for successful development, hence China's positive experience draws the attention of Kazakh society.

The relationship between China and the Republic of Kazakhstan has begun to form prior to Kazakhstan obtaining its independence, in other words, since the 18th century, when the Middle Zhuz

⁶ See: G. Nursha, "Kak 'miagkaia sila' Kitaia rabotaet v Kazakhstane?", available at [www.kisi.kz], 20 October, 2017.

⁷ A. Shustov, "'Miagkaia sila' drakona: kak Kitai pytaetsia zavoevat vliianie v Tsentralnoi Azii," available at [http://eurasia.expert/myagkaya-sila-drakona-kak-kitay-pytaetsya-zavoevat-vliianie-v-tsentralnoy-azii/], 9 January, 2018.

began adopting dual citizenship – Russian and Chinese. Since the break-up of the U.S.S.R., China began to form an entirely new relationship with the new state, the Republic of Kazakhstan.

Kazakhstan had fallen under China's soft charm a quarter of a century ago, almost immediately following the disintegration of the U.S.S.R. It began with the supply of cheap goods, household chemicals and textiles from Urumqi, which had provided an income to a large part of the Kazakhstan population who had lost their jobs and become shuttle traders. Over time, the "Made in China" tags appeared even on brand-name clothes. Any product with a "Beijing factory" tag was considered of great quality.

During the last 25 years, the bilateral relations between the PRC and Kazakhstan have been dynamically developing in different areas. Kazakhstan is China's key trade partner in the post-Soviet space in Central Asia. The trade turnover indicator is growing 10-12% per year. According to official PRC data, while in 2012 the trading volumes comprised \$25.68 billion, in 2017 they have gone up to over \$28.6 billion.⁸ According to the Charge d'Affaires of the PRC embassy in the Republic of Kazakhstan Sung Wei Dong, China has become Kazakhstan's major trading partner. In turn, the Republic of Kazakhstan has become the "world leader in the amount of Chinese investments attracted."⁹ Chinese companies are primarily investing in the hydrocarbon sector, with Chinese stock holders currently owning stakes in over 22 oil companies in Kazakhstan.¹⁰ The creation of a free trade area on the China-Kazakh border in 2006 has contributed to an increase of trading volumes.

Apart from promoting economic cooperation, participation in joint integrative projects also allows the countries to positively influence each other in cultural and civilizational terms. Up until recently China and Kazakhstan had no common points in this area, but with the formation of the Silk Road Economic Belt, Kazakhstan has become not only one of its important conduits, but also an active participant.

Aside from the trade and economic cooperation between the two states, close collaboration is taking place in the educational sphere with the aim of fostering human resources. Collaboration in the science and education spheres is based on two documents, namely, the Agreement between the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Ministry of Education of PRC dated 3 June, 2003, and the Agreement among the Governments of SCO member states on Cooperation in the Sphere of Education dated 15 June, 2006. The first agreement provides a framework for annual student exchange of up to 100 people. Over 3,000 Chinese students study in higher education institutions of the Republic of Kazakhstan, while over 11,000 students from Kazakhstan study in Chinese colleges and universities.¹¹ The State Council on Propagation of the Chinese Language under the Ministry of Science and Education of PRC (Hanban), which manages the Confucius Institutes, operates actively in Kazakhstan. Confucius Institutes are the instruments of propagation and popularization of Chinese culture abroad. This is China's long-term communication strategy. The first such institute was established in 2004 in Seoul. Although the history of such Chinese language centers dates back to 1987, the creation of a unified brand "allowed to establish a more consolidated team of scholars of Chinese, organize the learning process and promote Chinese culture abroad more efficiently." As of early 2017, there were 511 Confucius Institutes and 1,073 Confucius classes in 140 countries, where 2.1 million people were studying Chinese.¹²

⁸ See: Statistical Data of the PRC Foreign Ministry, available at [<http://www.fmprc.gov.cn>], 24 April, 2018 (in Chinese).

⁹ Interview with the *Charge d'Affaires* of the Chinese Embassy in the Republic of Kazakhstan Sun Wei Dong, available at [<http://kz.china-embassy.org/rus/sgxx/sgdt/t1199322.htm>], 18 April, 2018.

¹⁰ See: "V RK 22 nefnyanye kompanii s kitayskim uchastiem," available at [http://forbes.kz/process/probing/v_rk_rabotayut_22_neftyanyie_kompanii_s_kitayskim_uchastiem], 27 April, 2018.

¹¹ See: *Brief Statistical Report for 2016 regarding foreign students arriving in China*, available at [<http://www.moe.edu.cn/publicfiles/business/htmlfiles/moe/s5987/201303/148379.html>], 3 October, 2017 (in Chinese).

¹² See: G. Nursha, *op. cit.*

There are four Confucius Institutes in Kazakhstan, and since 2007 the International Kazakh-Chinese Academy has also been in operation. Also, the Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Government of PRC on mutual recognition of educational and academic credentials dated 20 December 2006 is in place. Another agreement, this time between the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Chinese National Oil and Gas Corporation, was concluded in 2011 in regard to cooperation in the education sphere, which provided the framework for personnel training for the oil and gas industry.

Annual cultural exchange also occurs between the two countries. This vector is also one of the instruments of China's soft power in Kazakhstan. Two Chinese cultural centers are currently functioning in the Republic of Kazakhstan – The Center of Chinese Culture in Almaty and the Chinese National and Cultural Center in Karaganda. For instance, a Special Commission for Cooperation in the Cultural Sphere was established in 2002. Practically every year PRC organizes performing tours in major Kazakhstan cities in the wake of the Chinese New Year. In 2011, it was a band from Nanjing, in 2012—a Hainan folk ensemble, in 2013—a troupe from Hunan.¹³ In addition, Chinese traditional art exhibitions, Chinese Culture Day and other events are held.

Since the ancient times, China and Kazakhstan have been friendly neighbors, the ancient Silk Road has tied the two countries closely. Since the establishment of diplomatic relations, the cooperation between China and the Republic of Kazakhstan has been developing productively, and the cultural contacts, which have attained great success, are a significant part of the process. Regular annual meetings of the China-Kazakhstan Subcommittee for Cultural and Humanitarian Cooperation have been held since its creation in 2005. The work of the subcommittee, which is presided over by the deputy ministers of culture of the two countries, embraces cultural artefacts, radio broadcasting, journalism, publishing industry, archives, writers' union, and other areas, becoming an efficient platform for bilateral academic exchange and cooperation. In the last several years, both sides have conducted cultural days, film weeks of both countries and other major events. In the sphere of cultural artefact protection, China and Kazakhstan have sent a preliminary inquiry to the UNESCO World Heritage Center regarding the jointly developed project Silk Roads: The Routes Network of the Chang'an-Tianshan Corridor. The *Kazakhstan Treasures* exhibition was held at China's National Museum, and a gala concert "Kazakhstan Culture Days" was conducted at the National Grand Theater of China as part of Culture Days in 2013. Also, in 2014 China held Chinese Culture Days in Kazakhstan. Exceptional Chinese performance troupes were sent to reveal unique Chinese culture and art to the people of Kazakhstan.

It is well known that China is a multi-national country that is home to 56 nationalities, including the Kazakhs. The Chinese government is making a great financial and material investment in assisting the Kazakh people in preserving and developing their unique national culture and identity. Many Chinese Kazakhs travel to Kazakhstan or visit it on business, and plenty of Kazakhstan citizens visit and study in China. Such grassroots exchange also contributes significantly to cultural exchange and contacts between the two countries and promotes mutual understanding and friendship between the two nations.

In addition, let us review the instruments that not only reflect the degree of efficiency of China's soft power, but also demonstrate the integration of Chinese culture with that of Kazakhstan. They include Chinese film distribution and the widespread presence of Chinese food. China currently invests a lot of money in film production. In 2013, it took the second place after the U.S. in the film production market volume, outperforming even Bollywood in India. Soon enough Chinese films will have a major presence in the cinemas of the post-Soviet countries.

¹³ See: "Chinese-Kazakhstan Cultural Ties," available at [<http://cpc.people.com.cn/n/2013/0905/c64387-22819235.html>], 15 April, 2018.

As the director of the UNESCO Center at the Al-Farabi Kazakhstan National University Layla Akhmetova notes, China is increasing its cooperation with film professionals in the post-Soviet space. Chinese films do not yet have sufficient presence in Kazakhstan. A Kazakhstan-China film about the love of a Chinese man for a Kazakh girl in Kazakhstan will become the first such project in the cultural sphere. The Eurasian Academy of Kazakhstan has also signed an agreement with China regarding the creation of a feature film about Almaty in 1942-1944.¹⁴ Apparently, China is searching for common points with its neighbors through film. While Hollywood blockbusters often portray technology manufactured in China, films about the common pages in the history of the war that is sacred for post-Soviet countries, signify that China is guided by strategic rather than economic interests in the post-Soviet space.

In addition, China is set on Chinese citizens beginning to explore Kazakhstan, coming to work and establishing their business there. It is not an accident that China is also working on the creation of a positive image of Kazakhstan and Kazakhs within China. A documentary *China and Kazakhstan: History of Friendship* has been widely broadcast on Chinese television. Kazakh TV channels have broadcast documentaries on Chinese culture and life—*China on the Tip of the Tongue*, *Family on Wheels*, and Chinese TV series.

A number of Chinese media resources operate in Kazakhstan, with cable TV packages with over 40 Chinese-language channels available to Kazakhstan residents, all the more so as Chinese enterprises are responsible for the socioeconomic climate in some of the regions, which stimulates the studying of Chinese. The fact that knowledge of the Chinese language is valuable in finding a good job has, for instance, become a norm in Western Kazakhstan. Just as in many other countries, there are offices of the Xinhua information agency, Renmin Ribao daily newspaper and Guanmin Ribao newspaper, China's international radio, China Central Television (CCTV) and Xinjian TV channel (in Kazakh). Meanwhile, the fact that Xinhua offices in Kazakhstan operate in Russian, which expands their audience in Kazakhstan, is also worth noting.

The situation with national cuisine is somewhat different—there are over 150 Chinese cafes and restaurants in various cities in the Republic of Kazakhstan, which are as popular as the Russian and American (fast-food) cafes. The PRC has started with the import of a small number of Chinese tea varieties, but the quality of the goods was always exemplary, with the assortment increasing year to year. Gradually Chinese dishware and figurines began appearing in Kazakh stores. Simple and elite tea ceremonies began to be held, with the aim of familiarizing the Kazakh population with Chinese culture. The precisely calibrated tea-drinking ceremony, where everything is governed by feng shui, reflects China's general strategy in its dealings with Kazakhstan—familiarize its population with Chinese culture in a non-obtrusive manner, but set its own rules of the game.

Special attention is heeded to the scale of bi-directional tourism between China and Kazakhstan. The number of tourists entering from the PRC is growing with each passing year. Health tourism in China is particularly attractive to the people of Kazakhstan, with business and recreational visits in the second place. However, Kazakhstan citizens cannot directly access China's tourism market, since all major social media networks are banned there.

Another important point in China's soft power policy in regard to the Republic of Kazakhstan is the migration of Chinese citizens. In recent years, certain experts have even expressed their concerns that it will increase social tension in the regions of Kazakhstan with a large migrant presence. There are also positive assessments of the situation, which claim that the number of foreign workers

¹⁴ See: "Kitai perenimaet gollivudskiy opyt," Interview with the Director of the UNESCO Center at the al-Farabi Kazakhstan National University Layla Akhmetova, available at [<https://www.ritmearasia.org/news--2016-12-18--kino-i-politika-na-prostorah-evrazii-mjagkaja-sila-iskusstva-27434>], 18 December, 2018.

does not exceed 3-5% in large cities, and tenths or hundredth of one percent of the entire workforce outside of metropolitan areas.¹⁵

In this regard, we would like to mention certain peculiarities that have emerged in Kazakhstan. For instance, the fear of the “Chinese threat,” pervasive in Kazakhstan, has become a certain hindrance. In the first years of Kazakhstan’s independence, an image of China as it has formed in the Soviet period was dominant there, since it was an ex-Soviet republic. This approach was determined, on the one side, by the U.S.S.R.’s view of China as a junior partner on the international arena, and on the other hand, following a deterioration in relations and a border conflict, as a potential enemy.

Currently, however, Kazakhstan has formed its own approach that differs both from the Russian outlook, and those of other post-Soviet countries’ citizens. Another factor that influences Kazakhstan’s perception of China is the fact that the two countries are neighbors. The peoples have interacted for several thousand years, and know each other well enough. That is why, unlike other countries that are geographically removed from China, Kazakhstan has formed a certain perception of its culture and traditions.

Meanwhile, in the context of China’s growing economic and military power, the neighbor factor gives rise to a “more sensitive attitude of Kazakhstan citizens to speculations on the topic of the Chinese threat,” and in very different spheres at that.¹⁶ An example is provided by the outbursts of internal polemics on the land issue in Kazakhstan.

In connection with this, and under the influence of the complicated perception of China by Kazakhstan population, the efficiency of Chinese soft power in the country is slowly declining. Accordingly, the effectiveness of the programs that aim to popularize and promote Chinese culture is decreasing as well. Educational programs, on the contrary, are attaining maximum results in Kazakhstan. There is, however, another difficulty that arises—the graduates have difficulties with finding employment, since there is a career ceiling for Kazakh citizens in Chinese companies, with the latter preferring to hire their countrymen for middle and high-level management positions. It is also important to mention that the demand for the Chinese language is extremely low outside of the retail sphere. Thus, despite the increasing opportunities of receiving education in China, the opportunity of subsequently utilizing it in Kazakhstan is scarce.

Conclusion

Summing up, we would like to note that while analyzing China’s foreign policy Joseph Nye states that “soft power primarily is produced by civil society—everything from universities and foundations to Hollywood and pop culture—not from the government.”¹⁷

The authors of this paper have attempted to examine which elements of soft power of China’s policy have been or will be implemented in Kazakhstan. As of now, Chinese authorities have not yet developed an official program on promoting its soft power policy in Central Asia. Nonetheless, judging by China’s activity in realizing all-pervading cultural and educational events in the region, it can be assumed that the country’s authorities are close to adopting such a program document. Meanwhile, it would be fair to state that China’s soft power policy is implemented using the following instruments: grants, Confucius Institutes, mass media activities, Chinese public foundations and other organizations, as well as various economic projects and China-Eurasia exhibitions.

¹⁵ See: “Pochemu my boimsia kitaiskikh migrantov?”, available at [http://goo.gl/ABfKPY], 20 April, 2018.

¹⁶ See: G. Nursha, *op. cit.*

¹⁷ See: J.S. Nye, “What China and Russia Don’t Get About Soft Power,” available at [http://foreignpolicy.com/2013/04/29/what-china-and-russia-dont-get-about-soft-power], 21 March, 2018.

In a period of time considered short by historical standards, China became a key international economic partner for Kazakhstan, as well as many other countries in the world. As the chief research associate of the Kazakhstan Institute of Strategic Studies Konstantin Syroezhkin suggests, China's economic success will gradually transform into political leverage.¹⁸ As it becomes far more important than just a buyer of energy resources and supplier of consumer goods, China is working on its image, on the proper ways to implement its policy without a negative attitude, continuing to expand its presence in the region.

In conclusion, we would like to note that the cultural and educational components dominate China's soft power politics. It can be stated that the soft power instruments currently utilized in Kazakhstan are universal, in the sense that they are used in the same way in any spot on the planet where China is present, and are not adapted to the realities of Kazakhstan.

Culture as the soft power of a country is the basis for long-term development, it determines countries' real weight and their future. The Chinese government invariably pursues a peaceful development politics. The Silk Road Economic Belt joint implementation initiative intends to become not only a business channel between China and the Central Asian states, but also a cultural exchange and integration conduit between China and countries of Central Asia.

¹⁸ Quoted from: K. Ezhnova, "Kitaiskaia 'miagkaia sila'. Realnost ili mif?", available at [<http://www.exclusive.kz/expertiza/politika/11991/>], 9 May, 2018.

THE EUROPEAN UNION- CENTRAL ASIA RELATIONS: KAZAKHSTAN AS A LEADING ACTOR

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ABSTRACT

Five independent republics—Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan—emerged in Central Asia (CA) after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. The newly independent states have followed different foreign policies and established bilateral and multilateral relations with other countries and international

organizations. One of these organizations is the European Union (EU). The relations of CA republics with the EU are prescribed by various documents that emphasize the common issues of democracy, human rights, rule of law, security, energy, transportation and trade. However, the EU's relations with each of the CA countries are based on dif-

ferent legal bases and the priorities in relations vary from country to country primarily according to their internal dynamics. The majority of existing research analyzes the EU's initiatives in CA republics and its attempts to establish partnership and cooperation with them from the viewpoint of the Union. However, it was observed that Kazakhstan's role as a motivator in the EU-Central Asia relations is a neglected part of related studies. As the region's largest country, Kazakhstan has adopted a multi-dimen-

sional foreign policy, and prioritizes peace, welfare and security both within and outside of its borders.

This study aims to analyze Kazakhstan's role in launching of policies by the EU in CA. Investigating the main developments between the EU and CA states during the past years, the authors determined that Kazakhstan has provided important contributions to the EU-CA joining process and is still encouraging other CA countries to cooperate more closely with the EU.

KEYWORDS: *Central Asia, cooperation, energy, European Union, Kazakhstan, strategy.*

Introduction

Cooperation between states has a long history, and has become the focus of academic debates. On the other hand, the emergence of non-state actors and transnational norms and ideas, as well as the question of collaboration efficiency, has widened the scope of the definition of cooperation. While cooperation has initially been defined as "the deliberate and coordinated adjustment of policies by states attempting to solve a mutual problem or achieve mutual gains," in the expanded definition, "cooperation comprises iterated processes, which continue beyond beginning agreements and result in complex and enduring governance orders and potential social change."¹ Traditionally, international cooperation is perceived as a non-persistent mechanism based on the states' national interests; it ends once the goal is achieved. However, the evolution of international relations and the emergence of an international political economy have changed these approaches that were defended by realists/neorealists. New developments in economic, commercial and financial regimes have converted international cooperation to a long-term and sometimes permanent process based on sustainable benefits. In particular, divergent security challenges and increased interdependence of the post-Cold War period have encouraged states' actions aimed at achieving cooperative outcomes, giving rise to a number of debates on cooperation in the literature on international relations. Approaches that tend to explain cooperation among nations along the lines of systemic level of analysis, game and regime theories, institutionalism, constructivism and structuralism have emerged as the major alternatives to realist views.

According to Milner, goal and gain are the two main components of international cooperation. In cooperation, each state adjusts its behavior working towards a certain goal, where each may have different rationales. Similarly, the gains of each state may not be equal in the process of collaboration, but they are mutual.² The sides of cooperation are the states, however, it can be established among

¹ K. O'Neill, J. Balsiger, S.D. VanDeveer, "Actors, Norms and Impact: Recent International Cooperation Theory and the Influence of the Agent-Structure Debate," *Annual Review of Political Science*, Vol. 7, 2004, pp. 149-175.

² See: H. Milner, "International Theories of Cooperation among Nations: Strengths and Weaknesses," *World Politics*, No. 44, April 1992, pp. 466-496.

state(s) and international organization(s), as well as other non-state actors. There are a number of ways to collaborate in international relations. Cooperative behavior and negotiated agreements are the usual types of collaboration. In some cases, it can be imposed if one of the sides is more dominant.

Increased political interaction between actors of international relations has served to blur the distinction between domestic and foreign policy. Globalization has led to internal political issues being increasingly externalized and external political issues becoming increasingly internalized. In light of these changes, international cooperation is one of the preferred methods of conducting countries' foreign policy and coordinating policies amongst themselves. In the contemporary world, international cooperation has extended to a wide range of areas, including political, military, economic, financial, energy and security issues, human rights, defense, transportation, environment, demography, migration, health, culture, education, and tourism.

General Framework of the EU-Central Asia Relations

Political framework: The TACIS program initiated by the European Community in 1991 for the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and Georgia has laid the foundation of the relations between the EU and CA republics. Thus, the program has for a long time determined many aspects of the politics of the EU in the former Soviet area,³ including the CA region.⁴

The signing of the Helsinki Final Act by the CA states, concurrently with the introduction of the TACIS program, has laid the groundwork for political cooperation between the countries of the region and Europe. In 1993, the European Commission launched another program for the former U.S.S.R. republics—TRACECA.⁵ With the aim of establishing a legal framework for their relations, the EU signed Partnership and Cooperation Agreements (PCA) with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan from 1994 to 1996. The PCA with Turkmenistan was signed in 1998. The PCA with Tajikistan was signed only in 2004 because of the civil war in the country. Similarly, PCAs with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan entered into force in 1999, and the PCA with Tajikistan came into force in 2010. However, ratification of the PCA with Turkmenistan has been delayed due to serious human rights concerns. Bilateral relations between the Union and Turkmenistan are governed by the Interim Agreement on trade and trade-related matters, which entered into force in August 2010. In addition, in its Communication about the future of the relations of the EU-CA states adopted in 1995 the European Commission emphasized the protection of stability in the region, the development of democratic institutions with broad participation, reduction of conflict sources, and implementing economic reforms.

Another important aspect of the relations between the Union and the CA republics in the 1990s was the INOGATE—one of the longest-running technical assistance programs in the energy sector, funded by the EU in 1996-2016.

³ Except for Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia.

⁴ See: V. Paramonov, A. Stokov, Z. Abduganieva, "Vliianie Evropeiskogo soiuza na Tsentralnuiu Aziyu: obzor, analiz i prognoz," Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, Almaty, 2017, p. 5, available at [<http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/kasachstan/13414-20170614.pdf>], 20 April, 2018.

⁵ On 8 September, 1998, 12 TRACECA countries signed the Basic Multilateral Agreement on International Transport for Development of the Europe-the Caucasus-Asia Corridor (MLA) with the aim of implementing in full their geopolitical and economic potentials. This agreement is a basis for the implementation of the TRACECA program. Turkmenistan is a participant to the TACIS-TRACECA programs, however, it is not a party to the MLA. For more information, see: [<http://www.traceca-org.org/en/traceca/history-of-traceca/>].

Following NATO’s military operation in Afghanistan in 2001, the political dialog of the EU-CA states was shifted to a new level as “the EU Troika-CA countries” within the framework of the Laeken Declaration published by the Union. It should be noted that prior to the Afghan war, the EU’s interests in CA were focused on energy more than security.⁶ As a matter of fact, the EU’s desire to increase its presence and to become a more visible actor in CA continued with the appointment of the Special Representative of the EU for CA in 2005 and the launching of the Strategy for a New Partnership in 2007.⁷ In this context, the funding of TACIS projects implemented before December 2006 has been conducted via the Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI) since January 2007.⁸

In the following years, the geographic location, political, economic and social structures of CA states continued to be the defining elements of their relations with the Union. Based on the above, the EU founded its relations with CA countries on the Multi-Annual Indicative Program adopted for each state’s needs and circumstances. However, *development, human rights, democracy and rule of law, good governance, political dialog, public reforms, judicial reforms, strengthening of regional and local governance capacities* are the most prominent spheres of the partnership and cooperation between sides.

Economic framework: PCAs not only set up the framework of political bonds, but also the scope of economic and trade relations between the EU and CA states. *Trade, energy, transportation, business and investment, financial cooperation, protection of intellectual and property rights* primarily form the economic dimension of PCAs. During the past years, the EU and CA countries managed to further their bilateral trade relations. However, during the period of 2013-2017 the volumes of trade between the sides decreased.

Table 1 shows the trade volumes between the EU with CA states in the last five years.

Table 1

EU-CA Countries Trade in 2013-2017 (million euros)

Years / Countries	EU Import					EU Export				
	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Kazakhstan	23,865	23,859	16,247	12,743	17,656	7,472	6,751	6,197	5,076	5,103
Kyrgyzstan	77	80	51	73	166	399	401	270	238	293
Tajikistan	89	61	58	94	43	196	216	166	175	172
Turkmenistan	866	816	427	637	253	1,082	1,154	1,095	1,169	895
Uzbekistan	247	233	246	175	221	1,404	1,404	1,591	1,625	1,688
Total	25,144	25,049	17,029	13,722	18,339	10,553	9,926	9,319	8,283	8,151

Source: European Commission, 2018.

⁶ See: T. Delpech, “Enlarging Europe’s Strategic Vision,” in: *The New Frontiers of Europe. The Enlargement of the European Union: Implications and Consequences*, ed. by D.S. Hamilton, Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, Washington D.C., 2005, pp. 157-168.

⁷ See: F. Bossuyt, “The European Union’s Political and Security Engagement with Central Asia: How to Move Forward,” *The Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst*, 6 September, 2017, available at [http://www.cacianalyst.org/publications/feature-articles/item/13464-the-european-union%E2%80%99s-political-and-security-engagement-with-central-asia-how-to-move-forward.html], 23 May, 2018.

⁸ See: V. Paramonov *et al.*, op. cit., p. 8.

The Brexit process, refugee problems and numerous similar difficulties prevent effective policy coordination in the EU, which is facing a multi-dimensional crisis. Increasing uncertainties both within and outside of the borders of the Union negatively affect the member states' economies. On the other hand, depending on the decline of global oil prices since the mid-2014 economic stagnation was observed in CA countries, which provide a significant portion of national income from energy sources.⁹ As a result, all these negative factors lead to a reduction in the volume of trade between the parties. For example: in 2017, the EU imported 18,339 million euros worth of goods and products from CA. This amount constitutes only 1% of total EU imports. Member states mainly import oil and natural gas, mineral fuels, lubricants and similar materials, livestock, food products and processed goods from CA countries. In the same period the EU's export to CA amounted to 8,151 million euros. The figure corresponds to 0,4% of total EU exports. The EU countries mainly export machineries, transport equipment, various chemicals and processed products.¹⁰

Kazakhstan is the largest trade partner of the EU in the region. Similarly, the EU is the first partner of Kazakhstan with an almost 40% share in this country's foreign trade. Kazakhstan's exports to the EU are heavily dominated by oil and gas, which account for more than 80% of the country's total exports. The EU is the largest investor in Kazakhstan, and approximately 50% of the Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) inflow originates from the EU.¹¹ In this context, the Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation in the field of Energy between the EU and Kazakhstan signed in 2006 has focused on issues such as diversification of transit routes, harmonization of legislation, strengthening of security of the supply and transit systems, development of renewable energy systems, increasing energy efficiency and technical cooperation.¹² A similar agreement was signed with Turkmenistan in 2008 and with Uzbekistan in 2011.

However, as already mentioned, the internal dynamics of each country determine the level of relations with the EU, resulting in differences between CA countries' trade volumes as well. For example, with the signing of the Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (EPCA) in Astana in December 2015, the EU has redeployed its relations with Kazakhstan, its most important partner in Central Asia, to a new level. On the other hand, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan fell behind in this sense due to their internal conditions and domestic and foreign policies. Another example is the benefits received by Kyrgyzstan, which has been a member of the World Trade Organization since 1998, from the EU's Generalized System of Preferences (GSP). Similarly, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan also benefit from the GSP in their trade with the EU.

Security framework: Certain security issues already existed in CA during Soviet times. Thus, the weakening of control as a result of the collapse of the Soviet Union and lack of experience of the newly independent states easily exposed region to a wide range of security problems.¹³ Being aware

⁹ See: World Bank Groups, "The Impact of China on Europe and Central Asia: Europe and Central Asia Economic Update," April 2016, p. 5, available at [<http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/136351467990956476/pdf/104605REVISED-ECA-2016.pdf>], 21 May, 2018.

¹⁰ See: European Commission, "Trade Statistics. Central Asia," available at [http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2013/november/tradoc_151896.pdf], 21 May, 2018.

¹¹ See: European Commission, "Kazakhstan," available at [<http://ec.europa.eu/trade/policy/countries-and-regions/countries/kazakhstan/>], 21 February, 2018.

¹² See: European Union External Action, "Kazakhstan," available at [https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/memorandum_of_understanding_on_co-operation_in_the_field_of_energy_between_the_european_union_and_the_republic_of_kazakhstan_en.pdf], 28 May, 2018.

¹³ See: S. Golunov, "Border Security in Central Asia: Before and After September 11," in: *Facing the Terrorist Challenge—Central Asia's Role in Regional and International Cooperation*, ed. by A.H. Ebnöther, E.M. Felberbauer, M. Malek, Bureau for Security Policy at the Austrian Ministry of Defence; National Defence Academy, Vienna and Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces, Geneva, in cooperation with PfP-Consortium of Defence Academies and Security Studies Institutes, Vienna and Geneva, April 2005, pp. 89-109, available at [http://www.bundesheer.at/pdf_pool/publikationen/10_wg_ftc_40.pdf], 24 May, 2018.

of this fact, the EU has already launched the Central Asia Drug Action Program (CADAP) in the beginning of 2001. However, the 11 September, 2001, attack was the turning point in the security aspect of the EU-CA relations. As one of the EU's largest regional programs in Central Asia, Border Management Program in Central Asia (BOMCA) started in 2003, aiming to assist in the gradual adoption of modern border management methods in Central Asia to enhance border security and facilitate legal trade and transit. In addition, half of financial resources of the Multi-Annual Indicative Program is allocated for regional security issues such as border management, fight against crime and drug trafficking.

Social framework: All programs launched by the EU up to the present time include social aspects, supporting socioeconomic development, rural development, civil society, employment, humanitarian aid, science, technology, research, environmental projects, and cultural relations. The EU supports the capability of national institutions and local communities to prepare for and respond to disaster, as the region is prone to natural threats, including earthquakes, floods and landslides, and threats related to environmental problems and climate change. It will be useful to note that EU priorities of social assistance to CA countries vary widely according to their socioeconomic situation.

CA states are the partner countries of Trans-European Mobility Program for University Studies (TEMPUS), Erasmus Mundus and Erasmus (+).

Kazakhstan as a Motivator of the EU-Central Asia Relations

Kazakhstan is not only the largest country and the biggest economy of CA with rich energy resources and minerals, but also one of the post-Soviet republics, with a significant Soviet heritage. Kazakhstan is the first CA state that was awarded a non-permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council in 2017-2018. It has been a member of World Trade Organization (WTO) since November 2015. Kazakhstan is also a key player in worldwide uranium exports, which hosts the Low Enriched Uranium Bank of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Increasing its geostrategic importance, Kazakhstan's geographic location allows the country to be an intersection point of new transcontinental transport routes such as the Western Europe-Western China Transport Corridor, TRACECA, and China's new Silk Road concept of One Belt, One Road.¹⁴ The above-mentioned facts throw light on the five top priorities of the country's Strategy 2050: the economy's accelerated technological modernization; improving and expanding the business sphere; macroeconomic stability; improving the quality of human capital; institutional reforms; security and fight against corruption.¹⁵

The country's potential and the aim to reach the stated goals lead Kazakhstan to take responsibility for the entire CA. This responsibility is clearly defined among the priorities and tasks of the country's foreign policy: "Kazakhstan is committed to a politically stable, economically sustainable and safe development of Central Asia. Acknowledging its responsibility and the role in the region, Kazakhstan will exert every effort to provide regional stability and security and take actions against

¹⁴ See: F. Umbach, S. Raszewski, "Strategic Perspectives for Bilateral Energy Cooperation Between the EU and Kazakhstan, Geo-Economic and Geopolitical Dimensions in Competition with Russia and China's Central Asia Policies," Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung and European Centre for Energy and Resource Security, Astana, 2016, available at [http://www.kas.de/wf/doc/kas_44337-1522-2-30.pdf?160304061521], 4 June, 2018.

¹⁵ For more information, see: "Strategy 2050," available at [<https://strategy2050.kz/en/>], 4 June, 2018.

new challenges and threats, including those originating from neighboring territories. Kazakhstan will also strive to develop intra-regional integration in Central Asia with the purpose of diminishing conflict potential, solving social-economic problems, and tackling water-energy issues and other considerations.¹⁶ In an effort to fulfill this task, Kazakhstan conducts a multi-dimensional foreign policy, “focusing on strengthening regional efforts to jointly counter internal and external challenges and threats, enhancing political, economic and cultural cooperation on a mutually beneficial and parity basis.”¹⁷ Thus, during the past years Kazakhstan has been the most active country as far as taking initiatives in regional cooperation in CA, trying to fill the gap of an “umbrella” organization in the region. Kazakhstan proceeds from its strong conviction that the region’s sustainable economic development is the best guarantee against the threat of international terrorism, religious fundamentalism, as well as drug trafficking. The echoing waves of the global crisis of 2008, the growing chaos in international relations, the erosion of state sovereignty under the impact of political globalization and the increasingly more frequent global precedents of regime change through outside interference¹⁸ push Kazakhstan to lead the way towards integrating the countries of the region with the world. Thus, President Nursultan Nazarbayev’s idea to create the Eurasian Economic Union, set forth in 1994, was followed by his recommendation on the development of common cooperation strategy in CA during a visit to Brussels in 2000. Support of integration processes in CA and of the region’s balanced development in accordance with the interests of unified Europe was aligned with President Nazarbayev’s proposal.¹⁹

Although Astana and Brussels could not agree on a joint document at that time, Nazarbayev’s suggestion assisted in changing the EU’s alienated approach to CA towards more close cooperation and partnership. At the same time, terrorism and security concerns in Afghanistan increased the political interest of European countries in the region. The mentioned shift in the European approach resulted in launching of the EU and Central Asia: Strategy for a New Partnership in 2007. Kazakhstan’s next step towards closer relations between the EU-CA was its suggestion on the appointment of national coordinators of the EU in the CA states. Moreover, in February 2008, Nazarbayev instructed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to prepare a special program Way to Europe, which was unexpected for the EU officials, which aimed at developing a detailed policy towards the Union. Kazakh initiative was welcomed by the EU authorities. In the subsequent phase, the key parameters have been set forth, with the document receiving the status of a state program. Three clear goals and objectives have been set: to get foreign direct investments from Europe in order to determine a high-level strategic partnership with the European countries by improving cooperation in the fields of new technologies, energy, transportation, engineering; to improve and enhance Kazakhstan institutional and legislative base by using the positive experience of the EU.²⁰ Approximately \$68 million have been allocated for the implementation of the three-year program approved by President Nazarbayev in August 2008.²¹ Thus, Kazakhstan clearly expressed its willingness for more close and comprehensive relations with the EU with a wide range of expectations such as:

¹⁶ The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan, “Foreign Policy Concept for 2014-2020. Republic of Kazakhstan,” available at [<http://mfa.gov.kz/en/content-view/kontseptsiya-vneshnoj-politiki-rk-na-2014-2020-gg>], 3 June, 2018.

¹⁷ Ibidem.

¹⁸ See: D. Malyshev, “The Eurasian Economic Union: Development Prospects,” *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, Vol. 16, Issue 2, 2015, p. 9.

¹⁹ See: R.S. Kurmangujin, “Kazakhstan i ES: ot strategii sotrudnichestva k novomu soglasheniu o prodvinutom partnerstve,” *Sravnitel'naya politika*, No. 1 (22), 2016, p. 107.

²⁰ See: G. Mostafa, “The Concept of ‘Eurasia’: Kazakhstan’s Eurasian Policy and Its Implications,” *Journal of Eurasian Studies*, Vol. 4, Issue 2, 2013, pp. 160-170.

²¹ See: R.S. Kurmangujin, op. cit., p. 112.

- stable foreign trade incomes from the EU's developed economies;
- diversification of consumers of Kazakhstan's energy resources;
- encouraging FDI for the country's economic development, employment, social welfare and prosperity;
- balancing out Russian and Chinese political, economic, social and cultural influence;
- ensuring the safety of transportation routes that traverse the country;
- incorporating foreign experiences for improving the economic and financial system;
- eliminating the deficit of technology and innovation;
- getting support in resolving security issues;
- promoting Kazakhstan's image as a value-based country.

An implementation of the program has not only provided an opportunity for the preparation of a new Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between Kazakhstan and the EU, which was signed on 21 December, 2015. Elevating relations between the sides to a higher level has stimulated other Central Asian countries to establish a closer relationship with the EU, as well as increased the EU's interest in the region.

Actually, Kazakhstan's decisive attitude towards the EU's active presence in CA manifested in the appointment of the Special Representative in Central Asia in 2005. As an extension of the developing partnership, in 2012 the Union reviewed its CA strategy, mainly focusing on the impact of Afghanistan on CA. The adoption of a decision on a renewed EU Strategy towards the Central Asian region in June 2017 has confirmed the EU's commitment to develop a strong and durable relationship with CA.

On the other hand, the removal of economic sanctions imposed on Uzbekistan by the Union and Uzbekistan's efforts to cooperate with the member countries and to move forward to join the ranks of developed democracies should be considered in the context of Kazakhstan's role in promoting the EU-Central Asia relations in some degree. Following Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and the EU initiated negotiations for an Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement that will bring this country closer to Europe and grant an elevated status to its dealings with the Union.

The role that was undertaken by Kazakhstan not only stimulates the relations of other CA countries with the EU on a bilateral level, but also promotes the cooperation between five Central Asian states. Considering the influence of the transition of power in Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, negotiations and discussions on security, counter-terrorism, energy partnership, border safety, water resources, transit routes, and common usage of Caspian ports became more active among region states.

Although these positive developments are taking place among the countries of the region, they completely overlap with the EU's priorities that are clearly expressed in the Central Asian Strategy of the Union. In this sense, the meeting of the top Kyrgyz and Uzbek defense officials to discuss bilateral military cooperation and regional security, a meeting that took place for the first time since the two Central Asian countries gained independence following the 1991 collapse of the Soviet Union, is a good sign.

On the other hand, the EU and Turkmenistan are committed to implementing the Trans-Caspian pipeline project, designed to bring Turkmen hydrocarbon resources to European markets. In fact, the launch of the annual EU-Central Asia Ministerial Meeting serves as an official platform for cooperation within CA and CA with the Union. The most important point here is that the process led by

Kazakhstan to enhance the EU-CA relations is not designed against any state, country or bloc in the region. Aiming to benefit all sides, Kazakhstan follows a policy that will provide an opportunity for Central Asian states to use their geographic location at the crossroads of world trade and natural resources for peace and well-being.

Conclusion

The world is going through a complicated period. Countries need each other more than ever. The cooperation between countries is inevitable now, at a time when natural resources are dwindling, security issues are escalating, and the lines between domestic and foreign policies is gradually disappearing. Under current conditions it is almost impossible for the states to ensure peace and prosperity for their nations without cooperation. As one of the largest countries in the world, Kazakhstan is well aware of this fact. With its initiatives towards the EU during past years, Kazakhstan has succeeded in changing the Union's conception of the CA as a region that is far from Europe both geographically and politically.

Thanks to its consistent attitudes towards Europe, only twenty-seven years after gaining independence by Central Asian states, tangible connections have been established between the EU and CA. Astana's pragmatic approach towards Europe could attract the Union's attention to the whole region. Influenced by the local, regional, international and global affairs, Kazakhstan's EU policies correspond to the interests of other Central Asian countries, which are less developed either economically or politically, and expedite their integration with the world. Moreover, Central Asia itself lacks a regional organization. Kazakhstan aims to fill this gap with the experience and support of the EU. Existing challenges and approaches of the new governments of the Central Asian countries provide suitable conditions for Kazakhstan's purposes.

THE PARTY SYSTEM AS AN ELEMENT OF POLITICAL MODERNIZATION OF KAZAKHSTAN

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ABSTRACT

Today, sovereign Kazakhstan is steadily moving towards consistent modernization, higher competitiveness in the globalized world and postindustrial development.

Its political party system can be described as a political institution that ensures the country's stability and sustainability.

A multi-party system and pluralism that should be developed and consolidated are

the two indispensable elements of democratization.

Despite their fundamental transformations, political parties and political systems have not disappeared from the stage—they have merely moved to qualitatively new positions.

At each new stage of social and political transformation political parties undergo radical changes; the same fully applies to

the party system in its quantitative and qualitative dimensions. Political parties of Kazakhstan have travelled the road from proto-parties to industrialized entities to self-organizing mechanisms of the political elites. In

order to clarify the prospects and the key trends of the country's political modernization, we should identify the specifics of Kazakhstan's party system and the nature of its impact on the state and civil society.

KEYWORDS: *party, the party system of Kazakhstan, modernization, identity, transformation of the political system, the state.*

Introduction

Political parties have covered the road from informal power groups to institutionalized political entities with organizational and social structures of their own. As such, they became an important element of contemporary states' political life that influence society and some of its segments. In this sense, they can be described as socio-political institutions, this definition being their inalienable attribute. Hence the second attribute of political parties—their claim to political power. In other words, only the parties ready to assume responsibility and play an important role in politics can describe themselves as a political power in the full sense of the word.

Broadly speaking, political parties are one of the results of historical development of states, however they are simultaneously under the influence of cultural, national, economic and other factors. In every state parties pass through identical, yet differently tinged, development stages. With parties as political organizations and inevitable participants in the political process, institutional factors—the form of governance and state organization, election laws and election system—gain even more consequence.

Kazakhstan acquired its multi-party system and party environment in the post-Soviet period of its development. In the 1990s, Kazakhstan experienced a sharp surge in the number of parties, a phenomenon created by the low threshold of numerical strength: in this way groups became political parties, a normal and acceptable state of affairs at the stage of transition.

Altogether, the transformation of political parties should increase their role as, primarily, inevitable participants in the elections, secondly, as one of the main actors of decision-making and, thirdly, as an instrument of citizens' socialization and their greater involvement in the country's political life.

Democratization of Kazakhstan society has added more weight to personal initiatives and personal activities. At the same time, a certain vagueness in personal identification and civil positions, which is reflected in the imprecise comprehension of social and political interests, is highly typical of the present development stage. Party membership determines and crystallizes individual political consciousness. As one of the very specific mechanisms that society relies on to control the state, political parties fulfill their regulatory and communicative functions. Those who study political parties as a link between the state and civil society demonstrate a somewhat indiscriminate approach to Western experience and tend to ignore post-Soviet specifics, mentality and centuries-old traditions of the people of Kazakhstan. It is no accident that today political modernization is described as a process of "formation, development and distribution of contemporary political institutions, practices and political structure as a whole. Political institutions and practices of our days are not copies of political institutions of the countries of developed democracy; they give adequate responses to and ensure

adjustment of the political system to the changing conditions and challenges of our days.”¹ In fact, the peculiarities of the civil society of Kazakhstan crop up at all stages from its emergence and development to its perfection; as such, they are partly responsible for the vague status of the institution of political parties that manifested itself in the functional, organizational and structural context.

Methodology

In our study we relied on retrospective, systemic, structural-functional and political factor analysis. Theoretical comprehension relies, to a great extent, on the theory of socio-political modernization, since the development of the state and the structure of the party system are seminally important for the modernization of the newly independent states. A constructivist approach to the studies of the party system has led us to the most adequate understanding of the role played by the stronger statehood and the process of transformation of state institutions in the emergence and consolidation of the party system in Kazakhstan.

Political Modernization in Contemporary Society

The makeup of contemporary society is determined, to a great extent, by the process of modernization, which has inundated all regions and all countries of the world. It is an integral process that affects all spheres of social life (economic, political, cultural, educational, professional, etc.). Shmuel Eisenstadt, one of the prominent modernization theory experts, defined modernization in the historical context as changes in those types of social, economic and political systems that had been developing in Western Europe and North America in the 17th-19th centuries before spreading to other European countries. In the 19th and 20th centuries, modernization has reached South America, Asia and Africa.²

Experts in different fields of knowledge not only study modernization as an integral process of social transformation patterned on Western societies; they identify economic, political, cultural, legal and other types of modernization. Political modernization is especially important, since the political system plays a great role in the social system of contemporary society.

Political modernization means positive changes in the political system caused by the adjustment to the demands of the time on the basis of the accumulated civilizational potential of state institutions and civil society and the innovative resource of the economy.

The main aim of political development identified within the framework of modernization concepts is a new type of interaction between the state and society, social and political mechanisms to engage the greater part of the country’s population into decision-making and create favorable conditions for social and economic development and social stability.

Samuel Huntington, a prominent American scholar, wrote that the concepts of social and political modernization should be set apart from political modernization and argued that social and economic modernization opened the doors to political modernization. According to him, political

¹ *Politichesky protsess: osnovnye aspekty i sposoby analiza*, Collection of education materials, ed. by E.Iu. Meleshkina, INFRA-M Publishing House, Moscow, 2001, p. 248.

² See: S.N. Eisenstadt, *Modernization: Protest and Change*, New York, 1966.

modernization was a process that embraced rationalization of power, differentiation of social, state and civil structures and raised the level of political involvement. He points out the following: “A basic and frequently overlooked distinction exists between political modernization defined as movement from a traditional to a modern polity and political modernization defined as the political aspects and political effects of social, economic, and cultural modernization.”³ He interpreted political modernization as democratization of political institutions and the political consciousness of society.

The modernization theory has identified the main trend within the framework of general globalization with due regard for the specifics of its manifestations in different social and political contexts. This approach has differentiated and justified the existence of two types of modernization: *original modernization*, which is present in all countries moving towards rational social structures through gradual development of their internal processes, and *secondary (reflected) modernization*, which is typical of the countries that fell behind in their development and are modernizing to catch up with the rest.

Wolfgang Zapf, one of the prominent students of modernization theory, further developed the above differentiation. He discussed modernization in a tripartite temporal context:

- “First, it is a secular process launched by the industrial revolution, within which there appeared a small group of modernized societies as we know them today;
- second, it is highly varied process in the course of which those that had fallen behind caught up with those that had outstripped them;
- third, it is an attempt of the modernized states to respond to the new challenges that crop up along the road of innovations and reforms.”⁴

As a rule, experts identify three echelons of modernization.

The first began in the 17th-18th centuries and spread to Northwestern and Central Europe and later to North America and Canada.⁵ All other countries and regions belong to the zone of the so-called transit or catching-up modernization. There are two echelons in this zone as well: big countries that are modernizing on their own independent platforms (Russia, Japan, Turkey, some of the Eastern European and Latin American countries). They constitute the second, after the West, echelon of modernization. The third echelon consists of the majority of the developing countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America with a history of colonialism and the status of raw material appendages to the West.

The countries of the first echelon modernized in the course of historical development realized on its own foundations. Many experts point to the internal, organic and endogenous nature of this type of modernization.

The countries of the second echelon had certain features in common, namely, an outstanding role of external factors: reliance on the experience gained by others in social and economic development and technological progress up to and including organizational forms of social institutions, problems or even retreats. “The countries of the second modernization echelon entered the road of industrial growth and development, technologies and mass education, political liberalization and the rule of law, even if mainly formal. In the latter half of the 20th century Japan, one of the second-echelon countries, managed to catch up with the countries of the first echelon and found itself in the state of transition to postmodernity.”⁶

³ S. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies*, Yale University Press, 1968, p. 35.

⁴ W. Zapf, “Teoria modernizatsii i razlichie putey obshchestvennogo razvitiia,” *Sotsis*, No. 8, 1998, p. 14.

⁵ See: V.A. Krasilshchikov, *V dogonku za proshedshim vekom: razvitie Rossii v XX veke s tochki zrenia mirovykh modernizatsiy*, ROSSPEN, Moscow, 1998—Rossiyskaia Gosudarstvennaia biblioteka, 2010, pp. 12-13.

⁶ M.S. Ashimbayev, *Politichesky tranzit: ot globalnogo k natsionalnomu izmereniu*, Elorda, Astana, 2002, p. 14.

Modernization of the countries of third echelon (the greater part of Latin America, Asia, Africa and the least economically developed countries of Southern Europe) began with colonization and supply of raw materials to the world trade system. This was a very specific type of modernization that depended on the West and was, therefore, unable to independently identify the parameters of its further civilizational development and the habitual lifestyle of the majority of the local people.

Under the pressure of global systemic changes, Western political science produced all sorts of concepts and theories of political development only to discover that the lineal and forward models of modernization and Westernization are hardly scientifically valid. This fact was growing increasingly more obvious as scholarly studies of social development of the third-echelon countries were deepening and widening with the gradually increasing body of empirical data.

Alain Touraine's studies of counter-modernization, for instance, allowed him to conclude that societies that have chosen Westernization as their variant of modernization were inevitably confronted with revolutions, riots and violence. He called this road the "separation of modernity and modernization" and anti-modernization. In plain words, this meant an open opposition to modernization.⁷

Victor Krasilshchikov is of a similar opinion. In one of his works he has concluded: "...modernization of the developing countries that follow Western prescriptions might upturn the weak structures of their economies, exacerbate social conflicts, destroy the environment and consolidate the monopolistic position of big business with inevitably negative results. In fact, this modernization was seen as 'modernization of backwardness'."⁸

It should be said that in different countries and regions of the world modernization is realized by different means and methods that use different mechanisms. On the other hand, political modernization has certain universal components:

- a differentiated political structure in which political roles and institutions are highly specialized;
- a state of a modern type with sovereignty and other features of a subject of national and international law;
- a state which plays a prominent role in all spheres of social life and which relies on a wider sphere of application and a greater role of the law that keeps the state and its citizens together;
- a state in which the number of citizens (persons with political and civil rights) is gradually increasing along with a wider involvement of social groups and individuals in political life;
- a state in which rational political bureaucracy appears and widens its influence to move away from a rational bureaucratic organization to a dominant system of governance and control over society;
- a state in which the functions and role of the traditional elites and their legitimacy are trimmed and modernization elites are strengthening.⁹

These universal components can be clearly seen in the political modernization of Kazakhstan, where modernization began as soon as the republic gained independence in 1991. Very much like in

⁷ See: V.I. Pantin, V.V. Lapkin, "Volny politicheskoy modernizatsii v istorii Rossii," *Polis*, No. 2, 1998, p. 40.

⁸ V.A. Krasilshchikov, "Evoliutsia teorii modernizatsii," in: *Modernizatsia: mirovoy opyt i sovremennyye Kazakhstan. Materialy respublikanskoy nauchno-prakticheskoy konferentsii 20-21 aprelya 1995 g.*, Part 1, Turan Independent University, Almaty, 1995, p. 22.

⁹ See: *Politichesky protsess: osnovnye aspekty i sposoby analiza*, p. 249.

all other countries, modernization in Kazakhstan was orientated towards market economy, democratic regime, new social institutions, changing forms of public consciousness and behavior of social groups and individuals. In one of his books President Nazarbayev has suggested that the traditional model should be replaced with “adapted modernization.”¹⁰

The periodization of the countries as echelons of modernization suggests a question: To which echelon of the catching-up modernization does Kazakhstan, one of the Soviet republics in the past, belong? The question about the echelon of modernization, under which Kazakhstan should be categorized, is not a question of purely academic interest. The answer to this question will determine the aims of modernization, its temporal limits and its stages; it will identify the social, historical, economic, ideological and other factors that interfere with or promote modernization.

In his work *Ideynaiia konsolidatsia obshchestva kak uslovie progressa Kazakhstana* (Ideological Consolidation of Society as an Indispensable Condition of Progress of Kazakhstan) Nursultan Nazarbayev has identified his country as a “developing country,” which means that it belongs to the third echelon of modernization.¹¹ In another of his works, *Strategia stanovleniia i razvitiia Kazakhstana kak suverenno go gosudarstva* (The Strategy of the Emergence and Development of Kazakhstan as a Sovereign State) the President of Kazakhstan examined South Korea, Singapore and other so-called new industrialized states to formulate his own “strategy of fast development.” These countries are modernizing quite successfully in many, including economic, respects and join the group of leading countries.

Modernization of the Political System of Kazakhstan

Today, practically all of the world’s states are facing the challenge of modernization. In each particular case, however, these tasks have certain specifics caused by the countries’ national and cultural identities even though there are certain common features created by the fact that the mega society has entered a new, post-industrial stage of its development.

The time has come for Kazakhstan to construct its national, cultural and civilizational identity.

Political modernization is especially important in this context; it ensures transit, that is, the transformation of social and political institutions into contemporary democratic and civil institutions—the presidency, constitutionalism, civil society, and the parliamentary and legal system. In Kazakhstan, political modernization is unfolding within the framework of the presidential form of governance that has already demonstrated its efficiency. The central role in political and economic modernization of Kazakhstan belongs to the state that formulates the aims and suggests adequate methods.

In the political sphere, modernization acquired a form of political transit, “understood as a transfer of the social and political system of any state from less adequate to a more adequate and more developed form of democracy that embraces the political organization of society and the political system of the state.”¹² The social and political institutions of Kazakhstan have been transformed in

¹⁰ N.A. Nazarbayev, *Na poroge XXI veka*, Öner, Almaty, 1996, pp. 125-128.

¹¹ See: N.A. Nazarbayev, “Ideynaiia konsolidatsia obshchestva kak uslovie progressa Kazakhstana,” in: *Strategia nezavisimosti*, Almaty, 2003, pp. 84-120.

¹² M.S. Ashimbayev, op. cit., p. 17.

the course of political modernization. We have in mind the present state of such social and political institutions as political parties, the system of the division of labor, presidency, parliamentarianism, the legal system, etc. The civil society is emerging.

Democratization of the political system is one of the key trends of political modernization, the process in which democratization is opposed by society in the process of reformation. In fact, the level of structural and functional division of political institutions in the traditional, authoritarian and totalitarian regimes is very low, which explains why in traditional societies with non-differentiated functions all the key functions belong to one person.

There is an opinion among political scientists in Kazakhstan that we should pay particular attention to the peculiarities of Eastern states. Zhanylzhan Junusova, for example, wrote that “in our republic, very much like in many Asian states, domination of the state over civil society is the main problem of democracy.”¹³ Konstantin Syroezhkin, who studied the specifics of statehood has written: “...Kazakhstan was no exception to the common rule; it inherited the common regularities typical of transit societies of the countries of the East.”¹⁴ The specifics of political modernization of Kazakhstan are explained by its transfer from a traditional to a contemporary open society.

Today, the modernization theory justifies the nature, scope and trends of political, social and economic changes in the post-totalitarian world. Currently, the theory of political modernization is especially interested in political systems observed in the transition states.

A sum-total of social, economic and political factors determine the specifics of modernization, and the following should be taken into account:

- the nature of the initial model of economic relationships: in other words, whether market economy predates political changes;
- political and economic reforms that should be carried out either simultaneously or one by one;
- the nature of the political regime (either totalitarian or authoritarian) that predated democracy;
- the nature of democratic transit: it is either reviving a democratic regime or developing it from scratch;
- the extent to which political modernization is connected with the content of national traditions and the state of social self-awareness.

Political modernization of Kazakhstan (or any other country, for that matter) is invariably accompanied by political crises. We deemed it necessary to offer our own description of the stages of political modernization; below they will be tied to the party and political system of Kazakhstan.

Political modernization can be conventionally divided into the following stages:

- *The problems confronting the authoritarian regime, and its liberalization.* The content of this stage is determined by wider individual and collective political rights, while the dominant structures remain intact. This, in turn, is connected with the involvement of common people in the political life of their country.

¹³ Zh.Kh. Junusova, *Institutsionalizatsia demokratii: model zapadnoy politologii dlia posttotalitarnykh obshchestv i opyt Respubliki Kazakhstan*, Author's thesis of a doctorate, Almaty, 1996, p. 147.

¹⁴ K.L. Syroezhkin, “Gosudarstvennost i etnichnost: problemy i priority perekhodnykh obshchestv,” in: *Kazakhstan na puti k ustoychivomu razvitiu*, Almaty, 1996, p. 143.

- *Establishment of democracy*. This stage of political modernization changes the quality of a political system: democratic political institutions and structures emerge that interact through democratic procedures. This process includes:
 - (a) appearance of a competitive party system;
 - (b) institutionalization of democratic mechanisms of state power.
- *Consolidation of democracy*. At this stage the society is gradually adapting itself to a new political mechanism and a new model of conflict settlement.

Political modernization is invariably accompanied by contradictions in all spheres of social life that inevitably affect political interests and the methods of their interaction. In order to arrive at the best possible political strategy that would prevent the crises typical of the period of transition, we should study the essence and the entire range of contradictions typical of modernization.

Russian political scientist Andranik Migranian is of the same opinion: “Having opted for the path of modernization where we first carry out political, and later economic, reforms and push aside the problems of the national-state order we might miss the chance to carry out reforms without serious cataclysms and might block off the road to democracy for many years to come.”¹⁵

As a rule, all definitions of political modernization concentrate on the following:

- the ability of a political system to adjust itself and respond to challenges and changing social conditions;
- a new qualitative level of interaction between the state and civil society is required to achieve social targets; in fact, this is an efficient dialog between power and society;
- in order to be well-timed and highly productive, this dialog should be ensured by the efficient functioning of newly established types of institutions, differentiation of political structures and the rule of law.

Political Parties of Kazakhstan in the System of Modernization

Political parties and their function of political representation can be defined as one of the key institutions of political modernization. Since the very first days of its independence (or even earlier—since the late 1980s) Kazakhstan has been moving towards a multi-party system. The party system of the Republic of Kazakhstan is based on the Law on Civil Associations, amendments to the Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan of 1998, the Law on Political Parties and the constitutional reform of 2007.

Political parties can be described as intermediaries between the political system and the milieu in which this system functions, or as doorkeepers of sorts that keep entrances into the political system open. These organizations and institutions articulate and aggregate group interests and move them up

¹⁵ A. Migranian, “Perestroyka kak popytka transformatsii totalitarnoy imperii,” in: A. Migranian, *Rossia v poiskakh identichnosti (1985-1995)*, Collection of articles and essays, Mezhdunarodnye otnoshenia, Moscow, 1997, p. 197.

to the political level. It is due to the existence of parties that social strata and groups previously isolated from politics acquire a chance to be involved in the political process.

This fully applies to the emergence of political parties in Kazakhstan in the transition period which replaced the Soviet totalitarian regime, under which the Communist Party dominated the political and all other spheres of social life. The one-party regime of the Soviet type was replaced by a multi-party system of a democratic type that gave the social layers of Kazakhstan society a chance to become a part of the political system of independent Kazakhstan.

The political process that consolidated the multi-party system in Kazakhstan is similar to those that took place in other CIS countries. We fully agree with those Russian and Kazakhstan experts who believe that this was not a transition from a one-party to a multi-party system; this was an interconnected process in the course of which the state and political monopoly of the C.P.S.U. was wiped out, and a new statehood and a corresponding party system created. We should bear in mind, however, that the development of the multi-party system in Kazakhstan has certain distinctive features caused by its historical, demographic, political and ethnocultural specifics.¹⁶

In 2008-2009, the state made it easier to register political parties.

An analysis of Kazakhstan's party system as we know it today points to the following typical features:

- multiparty system;
- legal basis and legal frameworks of party life;
- the numerical strength of any party, not fewer than 50 thousand, is defined by the corresponding law;
- wide territorial representation;
- dominant position of the Nur Otan Party in the party system;
- registered opposition parties.

In Kazakhstan the process of party system construction fully corresponds to the development logic of party systems in transition societies: today our party system is still fairly shaky and fragmented. "It is shaky because the share of voters that change their preferences between election cycles is still fairly big; it is fragmented because it consists of too many elements (or, in other words, parties)."¹⁷

Ideological aspects are no less important when it comes to the assessment of the party system: they make it possible to identify the parties and their political image. The post-totalitarian society of Kazakhstan has not yet arrived at an adequate assessment of the basic ideological concepts of the day—liberalism, conservatism and social-democracy—which means that there is no correspondence between social awareness and the party system. "In a society democratized 'from above' the forces that support changes normally close ranks around state structures or a charismatic leader, while ideology most likely determines practically nothing."¹⁸

¹⁶ See: A.Kh. Bizhanov, "Gosudarstvo i politicheskie partii: istoria i sovremennost," in: *Gosudarstvo i politicheskie partii: istoria i sovremennost: Materialy respublikanskoy nauchno-prakticheskoy konferentsii, Almaty, 27 aprelya 1998 g.*, PNEK, KISI, Almaty, 1998, pp. 20-21.

¹⁷ G.V. Golosov, "Formaty partiynykh system v novykh demokratiakh: institutsionalnye faktory neustoichivosti i fragmentatsii," *Polis*, No. 1, 1998, p. 106.

¹⁸ A.Kh. Bizhanov, *Respublika Kazakhstan: demokraticeskaja modernizatsia obshchestva perekhodnogo perioda*, Oner, Almaty, 1997, p. 78.

Today the Nur Otan Party is the most influential political force: in 2007 it gained an unprecedentedly big number of votes and all seats in the Mazhilis of the parliament of the Republic of Kazakhstan. The functions of any political party are not limited to political activities and election campaigns. As an active political instrument, any political party influences the state, its activities and the way it realizes its functions. The power and institutional potential of Nur Otan allow it to take part in the organization of the state power institutions and determine the main trends of domestic policies. Led by the President of Kazakhstan, it relies on ideological and propaganda mechanisms to preserve and strengthen national harmony and agreement in Kazakhstan.¹⁹

Today, one of the main trends of the country's politics is the transformation of its party and political system for the sake of higher efficiency and greater functional load. This, in turn, is intended to draw political parties into state governance and strategic decision-making. On the other hand, it is highly important to transform the structure of the country's political system into an efficient mechanism of accumulation of the electorate's political interests.

In fact, opposition parties operate side by side with pro-power social-political associations within the republic's party field. Very much like in any other state, Kazakhstan conducts the interaction between the parties and political power in its own specific way. All parties in the Republic of Kazakhstan are very active, especially during election cycles; in-between many remain passive.

Most of Kazakhstan's political parties emerged as a reaction to the liberalization of the totalitarian regime. As such, they were nothing more than "groups that crowded around ideological phantoms, slogans, symbols and popular political leaders."²⁰

Closer scrutiny of the emergence and development of Kazakhstan's party system produced the following important comments:

- First of all, during the independence period Kazakhstan acquired a multi-party system which at different stages was determined by the historical content, institutionalization and the social and cultural specifics of the society of Kazakhstan. This determined:
 - concentration and super-dynamic, even if fairly contradictory, process of the formation of the multi-party system;
 - the formation of the multi-party system taking place simultaneously with the statehood development;
 - the role of the state as the main political factor that strongly affects the party system;
 - domination of the ethnic component over program provisions and goal-setting;
 - the vagueness of the social basis of parties and the prospects of their widening; this explains why the parties are not influential enough;
 - domination of parties with obvious and charismatic leaders;
 - the apathy and indifference of society to party processes as a whole;
 - disagreements between the parties when it comes to the aims and methods of political activities;

¹⁹ See: E.K. Ertysbaev, *Kazakhstan i Nazarbayev: logika peremen*, Elorda, Astana, 2001, p. 576.

²⁰ S.E. Zaslavsky, "Funktsii politicheskikh party v rossiyskom obshchestve," in: *Rossia i sovremennyy mir*, Collection, ed. by L.K. Shkarenkov, INION RAN, Moscow, 1998, pp. 135-136.

- fragmentation of the party system;
- the fact that legal institutionalization of parties is trailing behind their political institutionalization.

Today, Kazakhstan has already acquired standards and outlines of the political field of its own. Most of the parties have their own social foundation, electoral and even parliamentary history; they try to influence the electoral process and its results, as well as formulate its rules and norms. They are very active between the elections (not long ago they were mainly active only during the electoral campaigns). Kazakhstan's party system is moving from extreme pluralism to one with a dominant party.

Opposition is not developing as it should in the absence of party rivalry and competitive milieu in the parliament of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Efficient opposition is one of the key features of a multi-party system.

- Secondly, an analysis of descriptions and parameters of the political parties of the independence period from the point of view of the theory of political institutions reveals that the party system of Kazakhstan is developing in waves, with six peaks. During the period of independence, there were 28 officially registered parties; today there are eight parties active in the political field.

Political parties were formed by different means and methods. At first, parties were built from below; later, from above or through a combination of the two methods. Political parties mostly arrived from the outside; a few of them were electoral-parliamentary, unitary or mixed. All of them wanted to establish a democratic society, none were a-systemic.

As a result of political modernization, the party system of Kazakhstan acquired the classical "one and a half party" structure, which, in one form or another, functions in Sweden, Japan, China, India, Malaysia, Singapore, Taiwan and other countries. Experts deemed it necessary to point out that "the trend of moving from the (quasi) multi-party system to one and a half structure is becoming increasingly clear. This is a result of restructuring the party field caused by an integration of pro-presidential parties, post-election fragmentation of the opposition camp and the result of constitutional reforms of 2007."²¹

In Kazakhstan, the one and a half party system has outcropped in the form of political domination and monopoly of Nur Otan. It relies on a mighty administrative resource further consolidated by the amendments to the Fundamental Law that permitted officials to combine state and party posts.

Today, the heat of inter-party competition has somewhat subsided: parties have become less active and less willing to attract more votes. The same fully applies to the ideological struggle and competition between the main political parties. Society is ready for a constructive dialog between the parties.

A slower pace of party construction is one of the most obvious trends. The past passion for party construction has become subdued; the process has slowed down. The party and political field of Kazakhstan has become structured; while parties acquire practically no new members.

On the whole, the party and political system is an element of political modernization of Kazakhstan. The state relies on the political and legal system to play its role in the development of the party system. The Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan occupies the central place in the process: it formulates the fundamental provisions that are absolutely indispensable for further existence and functioning of the party system.

²¹ E.T. Seylekanov, *Politicheskaia sistema Respubliki Kazakhstan: opyt razvitiia i perspektivy*, Monograph, KISI under the President of the RK, Almaty, 2009, p. 186.

The Party and Ideological Variety in Kazakhstan

The ideological foundations of the typology of political parties in contemporary science can be described as one of the reasons of party and ideological variety in Kazakhstan. The ideological aspects of party classification are an inalienable element of any analysis of the party system. Back in 1995, Ilyas Karsakov, one of the Kazakhstan experts offered a non-traditional classification of political parties of Kazakhstan and Russia based on their attitudes to reforms. He has identified the following blocs for Kazakhstan:

- National-radical parties (Alash, Azat).
- Pro-government parties.
- Liberal-democratic parties.
- Parties of the left-centrist bloc.
- Left radical parties.²²

As this classification shows, at the stage of its formation, pluralism was inherent in Kazakhstan's party system, which spoke of a wide range of opinions in society.

In the context of social and political modernization and globalization, the ideological, axiological and political attitudes of the common people are rooted in the basic ideological trends that have been responsible for the social, economic and political development of states and nations in the last 200 years. They are liberalism, socialism and nationalism responsible, in their turn, for political institutions and political practices of all contemporary states.

Political parties in Kazakhstan are democratic, liberal, social-democratic or communist. This means that Kazakhstan is a modernized society, whose mass consciousness reflects all main ideological trends of our days.

In one of his works that deal with social politics and political transformations in Kazakhstan expert and politician Imagali Tasmagambetov has analyzed party programs, their attitude to social problems and the methods of their settlement to identify three types of political parties:

- Centrists.
- Left radicals.
- Right radicals.
- Ethnically oriented parties of the national-democratic type.²³

It is highly important to point out that in Kazakhstan the party and ideological variety is highly specific: the parties' ideological platforms fully or partially contradict their nature and the real content of their activity.

The ideological picture of almost any post-Soviet society is highly complicated: often enough the same people demonstrate devotion to different ideological and frequently mutually exclusive

²² See: I. Karsakov, "Politicheskie partii Rossii i Kazakhstana: sravnitelny analiz," *Sayosat*, No. 5, 1995, pp. 25-26.

²³ See: I.N. Tasmagambetov, *Sotsialnaia politika i politicheskaia transformatsia*, Institute of Development of Kazakhstan, Almaty, 1997, pp. 163-200.

trends. This explains why many political scientists and sociologists write about the highly paradoxical conscience of the post-Soviet citizen and society that looks more like a cocktail of liberalism, socialism and nationalism than anything else.

In his *Les partis politiques* (Political Parties: Their Organization and Activity in the Modern State) prominent French researcher Maurice Duverger paid particular attention to the ideological aspect of the political parties' activities in the form of public opinion: "It is highly important to distinguish between the so-called processed and unprocessed public opinion... Parties express public opinion and shape it to equal extent, likewise, they form it and deform it ... this is a dialog rather than an echo. Without parties nothing but trends would exist—vague, instinctive, varied, depending on nature, education, customs and the social context."²⁴

The political and ideological situation that emerged in most of the post-Soviet states pushed the political parties into a paradoxical situation. On the one hand, conditions that are particularly conducive to the existence and functioning of political parties and political systems emerged. On the other hand, the inertia of the masses makes it much harder for the political parties and party systems to function relatively efficiently.

Henry Hale, in particular, in his survey of what Western experts wrote about post-Soviet problems, has specified why political parties in Russia and in newly independent states are weak and unpopular.²⁵

- He writes that "voters have been suspicious of the new idea of a 'party,' after having had a very bad experience under the U.S.S.R."
- Second, "the Soviet regime destroyed the social cleavage and related social infrastructure that are said ... to give birth to parties. The transition ... had failed to create new stable cleavages" indispensable for successful functioning of political parties and party systems.
- Third, the political institutions of post-Soviet countries, including Kazakhstan, "have not provided proper incentives for party formation."²⁶
- Fourth, the fairly limited organizational resources available to political leaders deprived them of a chance to build up fairly strong political structures.
- Fifth, Russia's political tradition that relied on strong executive power and weak legislative and legal power was borrowed by the post-Soviet states. This tradition limits the chances of forming party systems that mostly align themselves with legislative power and representative structures rather than with executive and administrative structures.

Henry Hale believes that political parties in the post-Soviet states are weak and unpopular mostly for institutional and organizational reasons. This is true, yet there are reasons of an ideological nature that are no less important; we have in mind the shortcomings of ideological efforts of the political parties of Kazakhstan and other post-Soviet states as well as their social and psychological environment.

We insist that political parties are weak and unpopular not only for external but also for internal reasons: they should pay more attention to their ideological platforms which remain vague and unclear so far.

²⁴ M. Duverger, *Politicheskie partii*, Transl. from the French, Akademichesky proekt, Moscow, 2000, p. 455.

²⁵ See: H.E. Hale, *Why Not Parties in Russia?: Democracy, Federalism, and the State*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 2007, p. 4.

²⁶ *Ibidem*.

Many parties are not hesitant to discuss their ideologies and even include them in their names. Indeed, there are democratic, liberal, liberal-democratic, socialist, social-democratic, communist and other parties in Kazakhstan. The programs and the social foundation (if any) of the majority of them do not correspond to their names; the same fully applies to what they are doing and to their relationships with other parties, state structures and civil society institutions.

Experts in Kazakhstan, likewise, revealed a lot of interest in this problem: “The ideological problem may not fully correspond to the true nature of parties. This means that we need different assessment criteria, different classification systems or even a different political science since the Western patterns when applied to a non-Western political environment look like an ill-fitting suit,” writes Azat Peruashev.²⁷

This means that a high-quality and comprehensive analysis should rest on certain assessment criteria, systems of classification and typology that fully correspond to the realities of Kazakhstan.

Berik Abdygaliev has offered a highly original and completely non-Western approach to the typology of Kazakhstan’s political parties. His classification ignores the ideological foundation of the parties and is based on the way they are related to power within the “upper/lower classes” disposition:

- a party of the upper stratum designed to conscript the lower stratum;
- the party of the lower stratum that tries to climb up to the top;
- the party of the lower stratum designed to support the upper stratum.²⁸

There are many reasons behind this, the main being the vagueness of their ideological foundation which we have mentioned above, and which makes their social foundation and hence their electorate unclear. These parties do not have a clearly outlined social core that treats the party as its own, and identifies itself with the party, while the latter speaks on the political stage on its behalf.

Conclusion

In democratic societies parties are used as ideological instruments of expressing political identities and solidarity of the masses. This means that ideology keeps parties and masses together. Ideology is a spiritual instrument used by a party to attract new followers.

On the whole, ideology is a generalized expression of ideals and values invariably present in human consciousness. Émile Durkheim demonstrated in his time that human consciousness, ideals and values being its basic elements, is determined by the place man occupies in society. Those who occupy similar or close positions have identical ideas about social structure, political institutions and processes, which confirms their political identity.

Political identity is actualized through party activities in the ideological sphere. Political parties aggregate a wide variety of attitudes and opinions of socially and ideologically like-minded people within an ideology that it uses to establish contact with those individuals and social groups whose interests it represents on the political arena. This allows it to search for and gradually identify a population group which will become its social foundation.

²⁷ See: A. Peruashev, *Institutsializatsia politicheskoy partii v sovremennom Kazakhstane. Opyt GPK*, Strategia Analytical Center, Almaty, 2002, pp. 21-22.

²⁸ See: B. Abdygaliev, “Politicheskie partii i obshchestvennye organizatsii Kazakhstana,” in: *Demokratizatsia obshchestva—magistralny put razvitiia Kazakhstana*, Collection of Documents of the Republican Scientific and Practical Conference, Almaty, 10 October, 1995, KISI at the President of the RK, Almaty, 1995, pp. 81-82.

This means that public opinion is the most important sphere of activity of any political party since all types of parties' political activity, up to and including election campaigns and the periods between them, are mediated through public opinion. It is highly important to bear in mind that the methods of mediation through public opinion are determined, to a great extent, by party ideologies. This means that parties can represent public opinion through their ideologies.

REGIONAL POLICY

KAZAKHSTAN DIPLOMACY IN DEFINING THE LEGAL STATUS OF THE CASPIAN SEA: 1991-2017

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ABSTRACT

This article considers the issue of the legal status of the Caspian Sea, its historical background, the key documents that currently regulate various aspects of this status, and the specifics of Kazakhstan's policy on this issue in a broad international context. The need to determine the legal status of the Caspian Sea arose after the breakup of the U.S.S.R., when the emergence of new entities of international law—Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan—made it necessary to divide the waters and seabed of the Caspian between five countries. The efforts to determine the status of the Caspian are seriously hindered, in particular, by the unresolved issue of whether it should be classified as a lake or a sea: the delimitation of lakes and seas between littoral countries is governed by different rules of international law. Kazakhstan owns a large part of the Caspian seabed and Caspian oil and gas reserves, which is why it is highly interested in defining the status of the Caspian Sea. Owing to its multilateral cooperation diplomacy, Kazakhstan has earned the reputation of the main initiator of many undertakings in this area. The fifth Caspian Summit to be held in Kazakhstan will provide new opportunities for Kazakhstan diplomacy to take an active part in resolving the existing problems and enhancing the country's prestige in the international arena.

The purpose of this study is to analyze the strategic diplomacy of Kazakhstan in matters of defining the status of the Caspian Sea in the period from 1991 to 2017.

The countries of the Caspian region demonstrate different approaches to the problem of the legal status of the Caspian, determined by both historical and political contexts. That is why it is important to identify the general and specific in regional political processes and the opportunities to resolve this issue and overcome the existing contradictions. The study is factually based on primary sources. In addition, the authors have analyzed a large body of regional and extra-regional research literature and data collected from the publications and websites of official institutions. The research method used is that of general qualitative analysis.

The study is divided into the following sections: the main characteristics of Kazakhstan's position on the status of the Caspian Sea; Kazakhstan's agreements with Russia and Azerbaijan on the delimitation of the Caspian Sea in the period from 1998 to 2003; the Framework Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Caspian Sea (Tehran Convention) of November 2003; an analysis of the first four Caspian summits; and Kazakhstan's "diplomatic maneuvers" strategy in the period from 1998 to 2017.

KEYWORDS: *legal status of the Caspian, Kazakhstan's initiatives, delimitation of maritime boundaries, convention, agreement.*

Introduction

The article identifies the stages of the negotiations on the legal status of the Caspian and shows how the position of each particular country has changed over time, taking into account its historical conditions. It also considers the possibility, in light of the experience of recent years, of creating an organization to ensure the security of the Caspian littoral states and analyzes the prerequisites for this.

1. The 2003 Tehran Convention plays an important role in protecting the natural environment of the Caspian Sea, particularly in preventing the extinction of sturgeon and environmental damage from drilling in the Caspian basin.
2. An important precedent was set by Kazakhstan's legal initiative in resolving the issue of the legal status of the northern part of the Caspian Sea (Kazakhstan, Russia, and Azerbaijan) through bilateral and trilateral agreements. That was how Kazakhstan defined its own borders (boundary lines with the Russian Federation, Azerbaijan, and Turkmenistan). The southern littoral states can also resolve the boundary delimitation problem by launching a similar initiative to conclude bilateral or trilateral agreements.
3. The Statement adopted by the fourth summit of Caspian littoral states (Caspian Summit) in Astrakhan on 29 September, 2014 deprived third countries of the right to a military presence in the Caspian Sea in order to enhance security in the region. In recent years, however, the use of means of warfare by the Russian Caspian Flotilla in the Syrian conflict has threatened the security of the Caspian Sea. Russia's use of Caspian waters to conduct military operations without the consent of the other littoral states has added urgency to regional security issues. The postponement of the forthcoming fifth summit in Kazakhstan is reportedly due precisely to the Syrian conflict. While postponing the summit, the guarantor states of the Astana peace process for Syria held a ministerial meeting in Astana on 16 March, 2018, which proves that regional security is higher on the agenda of the littoral states than the status of the Caspian.

In the opinion of the authors, the fifth Caspian Summit will provide an opportunity for the Caspian littoral states to eliminate many security problems by creating an organization for security. The presence of extra-regional forces was ruled out in the context of the Statement made at the fourth Caspian Summit in Astrakhan, but it is also necessary to take specific precautionary measures against the activities of non-state actors, including ISIL and other radical groups.

4. The decision to hold the next summit in Kazakhstan as the state that has launched the largest number of initiatives on the status of the Caspian Sea paves the way to a final consensus among the littoral states.

Kazakhstan's Position on the Status of the Caspian Sea

Back in early 1994, the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Kazakhstan drafted an Agreement on Development of Natural Resources in the Caspian Sea, which provided for the division of the submarine part of the sea into sectors in which each state would have an exclusive sovereign right to exploit natural resources. That draft was based on the concept of enclosed sea, as defined in the 1982 Convention on the Law of the Sea, and applies (with some adjustments) the key principles and provisions of that Convention to the Caspian. According to the Convention, the state boundary is established along the limits of the territorial sea, with an exclusive economic zone for each state extending beyond and adjacent to the territorial sea. But such a regime, for all its obvious merits, could lead to the loss of the Caspian as a unique natural phenomenon.¹ That is why Kazakhstan's proposal

¹ See: Yu. Chuikov, "Vozvrashchaias k problemam Kaspia," *Astrakhanskii vestnik ekologicheskogo obrazovania*, No. 1 (17), 2011, pp. 43-87.

was to adapt the general principles and provisions of the U.N. Convention to the specific conditions of the Caspian, renewing their legal content and terminology so as to take into account the specific features of the Caspian Sea, the individual and common interests of all its littoral states, the task of preserving its ecosystem, and the need to develop cooperation in ensuring peace and stability in the region.²

In November 1996, the foreign ministers of the Caspian littoral states met in Ashgabat, where they adopted a declaration on maintaining the existing regime of the Caspian Sea until its status was finally determined. That meeting was the starting point for the negotiation process on the status of the Caspian Sea. In the continuous debates on this issue, the parties proposed different approaches to the legal status of the Caspian Sea.³

Initially, Russia and Iran took the same position. At the meeting in Ashgabat in November 1996, the foreign ministers of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Russian Federation, and Turkmenistan signed a Memorandum of Understanding between Iran, Russia, and Turkmenistan in developing the mineral resources of the Caspian Sea.⁴

The stand taken by Kazakhstan was that certain provisions of the 1982 U.N. Convention on the Law of the Sea should be extended to the Caspian Sea taking into account its specific nature as a single ecosystem. Its proposal was to divide the seabed and its resources based on the median line principle, while establishing the limits of the territorial waters and fishing zones by agreement between the littoral states. The remaining part of the sea and its surface were to be open only to merchant and fishing vessels of the littoral states based on the principle of freedom of navigation and on agreed fishing quotas. The landlocked Caspian states were to enjoy freedom of transit through the territories of Russia and Iran by all means of transport for access to the World Ocean.⁵

Kazakhstan's position on the division of the Caspian was based on the sectoral principle, but it was only the seabed with its subsoil that was to be delimited, while issues related to fishing, navigation, and the environment were to be "resolved jointly," without harming the interests of any Caspian state. As for Russia, it was initially in favor of maintaining the regime established by Soviet-Iranian treaties; i.e., it adhered to the condominium principle. At that time, Moscow proposed the establishment of a 45-nautical mile coastal zone in which each of the Caspian states would have an exclusive right to exploit the hydrocarbon resources of the seabed and subsoil. But Russia's position has changed over time under the impact of a number of circumstances, moving closer to that of Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan. The various positions were articulated at a conference in Moscow in 1994, where Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Russia presented their draft conventions on the legal status of the Caspian sea. Azerbaijan's proposal was to treat the Caspian as a border lake with division into sectors, and Kazakhstan proposed treating the Caspian as an "enclosed sea," as regulated by the 1982 U.N. Convention on the Law of the Sea, namely, articles 122 and 123 on enclosed or semi-enclosed seas. At a meeting of deputy foreign ministers of the five Caspian states in Ashgabat in October 1996, the parties decided to set up a Special Working Group (SWR) for developing a Convention on the Legal Status of the Caspian Sea. That was when the littoral states began to coordinate their positions. Later that year, Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan took a common stand in protecting their interests in the Caspian. They recognized each other's right and the right of each of the littoral states to explore and exploit the mineral resources of the Caspian. In 1997, the presidents of Kazakhstan and Russia issued

² See: I. Vovk, P. Ivanov, "Respublika Kazakhstan: poisk reshenia problemy pravovogo statusa Kaspiiskogo moria v poslednee desiatiletie XX veka," *Vestnik OGU*, No. 5, 2013, pp. 30-35.

³ See: Ya. Özdemir, *Kazakistan, Azerbaycan, Türkménistan ve Özbekistanın Enerji Potansiyelleri ve Politikaları*, Atılım Üniversitesi, Ankara, 2007, p. 16 (Ya. Özdemir, *Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan: Energy Policy and Potentials*, Atılım University, Ankara, 2007, p. 16).

⁴ See: *Ibid.*, p. 83.

⁵ See: N. Nazarbayev, *Kazakhstanskii put*, Arko Press, Astana, 2006, p 123.

a Joint Statement on Cooperation, in which they declared their intention to be guided by the principle of consensus in the joint development of the natural resources of the Caspian basin.⁶

In view of that, according to statements on the status of the Caspian made by Kassym-Zhomart Tokayev, the then foreign minister of Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan was able to support the approach of Kazakhstan, Russia, and Azerbaijan. Tokayev wrote: “Kazakhstan, Russia, and Azerbaijan support the sectoral division of the Caspian seabed. Turkmenistan’s position ‘varies.’ I hope it will support our position.”⁷ Bulat Sarsenbayev, Deputy Director of the International Legal Department of the Foreign Ministry of the Republic of Kazakhstan, noted in this context: Kazakhstan is in favor of dividing the Caspian seabed and subsoil into national sectors along a median line and establishing coastal and fishing zones of a certain width. Under maritime law, the coastal zones will be sovereign state territory similar to territorial seas. Kazakhstan supports a phased approach to defining the legal status of the Caspian. That is why it thinks it necessary to start by resolving the issues related to the division of the Caspian shelf and to the marine environment. Kazakhstan and Russia were the first to reach an understanding and agreement on developing the seabed resources of the Caspian, which is further evidence of their mutual desire to develop strategic partnership in every area.⁸

Kazakhstan’s interests are largely determined by potential oil and gas resources in the northern part of the Caspian Sea. An improvement of the situation in this area is a priority of Kazakhstan’s energy policy. Following reports about the existence of vast oil and gas resources in the Northern Caspian, Kazakhstan intensified its diplomatic efforts to resolve the issue of joint use of deep-sea resources and recognition of its rights to the resources of the Northern Caspian in international law. Moreover, Kazakhstan has continued to transport oil through existing pipelines, including the Atyrau-Samara line. In addition, it is developing a transportation system to ship oil to Baku by barge. It has also built an oil pipeline to China.⁹

Kazakhstan’s Agreements with Russia and Azerbaijan on the Delimitation of the Caspian Sea in the Period from 1998 to 2003

“The first result of our talks (with President Yeltsin.—*Ed.*) was a Joint Statement by the Presidents of Russia and Kazakhstan on Cooperation in the Use of the Caspian Sea, which we signed in Almaty on 27 April, 1996. In that Statement, the parties recognized each other’s right to carry out activities with a view to exploiting the mineral and biological resources of the Caspian. Later on, I signed similar documents establishing the main elements of the legal status of the Caspian and the principles of activities at sea with the presidents of Iran and Azerbaijan. On 6 July, 1998, an Agreement on the Delimitation of the Seabed of the Northern Part of the Caspian Sea for the Purpose of Extending Sovereign Rights to Subsoil Use was signed by me and Boris Yeltsin in Moscow. Its

⁶ See: B. Sultanov, *Kaspiiskii region: aktualnye problemy razvitiia (ekspertnyi vzgliad)*, KISI under the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2012, Almaty, pp. 29-31.

⁷ K. Tokayev, *Pod stiagom nezavisimosti: ocherki o vneshnei politike Kazakhstana*, Bilim, Almaty, 1997, p. 43.

⁸ See: B. Sarsenbayev, “Kazakhstan’s Position Regarding the Legal Status of the Caspian and Outlook for Economic Development of the Region,” *Kazakhstan Business Magazine*, No. 2, 2002, pp. 2-5.

⁹ See: S. Zhiznin, “Ekonomika i geopolitika kaspiiskoi energeticheskoi diplomatii,” *Obshchestvo-Politika-Ekonomika*, No. 4, 2012, pp. 50-56.

fundamental novelty was that the parties agreed to divide the seabed of the Northern Caspian between Kazakhstan and Russia based on a modified median line, finally abandoning the idea of a condominium. As a result, a Protocol to that Agreement establishing the coordinates of the modified median line was signed in Moscow on 13 May, 2002, this time with President Putin. Meanwhile, Baku was gradually changing its position and moving towards the Kazakhstan version, as clearly demonstrated by the Agreement between Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan on the Delimitation of the Caspian Seabed, signed by me and President Heydar Aliyev of Azerbaijan on 29 November, 2001, and the Protocol to that Agreement, signed on 27 February, 2003.¹⁰

According to the Protocol of 13 May, 2002, the disputed oil fields Kurmangazy, Khvalynskoye, and Tsentralnoye, located on the median line between Kazakhstan and Russia, should, as a rule, be explored jointly by the two countries on a fifty-fifty basis. In September 2002, Azerbaijan signed a similar delimitation agreement with Russia.¹¹

“The signing in Almaty on 14 May, 2003 of a trilateral Agreement between the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Azerbaijan Republic, and the Russian Federation on the Junction Point of the Lines Delimiting Adjacent Areas of the Caspian Seabed completed the process of delimitation of the seabed of the northern part of the Caspian Sea. During a visit to Almaty by President Saparmurat Niyazov of Turkmenistan on 27 February, 1997, I managed to convince him to sign a Joint Statement saying that until the Caspian states reached an agreement on the status of the Caspian Sea, they would abide by the delimitation of administrative-territorial boundaries based on the median line. Thus, on the main point at issue, Ashgabat also sided with Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan.”¹² (The Agreement between Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan on the delimitation of the Caspian Sea between the two countries was signed later, on 2 December, 2014, and came into force on 31 July, 2015.¹³) The main content of the arrangement between the three littoral states (Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, and Russia) was the signing of the above-mentioned 2003 Almaty Agreement between these three states on the junction point of the lines delimiting the seabed and subsoil of the Caspian based on earlier bilateral agreements. It was signed with a “clear definition of the coordinates of the junction (42° 33.6' North 49° 53.3' East). According to the arrangement the shares of the Caspian were divided roughly as follows: Russia—19%, Kazakhstan—29%, Azerbaijan—18-19%. It has to be pointed out that this very restricted delimitation of the seabed of the Caspian that took place between only three of the littoral states is far from the adequate international legal status for the Caspian. These delimitation lines are hardly state borders, due to the fact that waters and their navigation as well as many other issues were left unresolved. Not to mention the fact that only northern part of the Caspian was involved.”¹⁴

The draft Convention on the Legal Status of the Caspian Sea has not yet been adopted, but all Caspian states have already “nationalized”—in varying degrees, on a unilateral or bilateral basis—their sectors. Today, the Caspian has an “Azerbaijan sector,” “territorial waters” of Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, and “national seabed sectors” of Russia and Kazakhstan. For the time being, Iran alone is not on this list. At present, the parties involved in the talks on the legal status have focused on the Russian formula “divided seabed, common waters.”¹⁵ At this stage, Kazakhstan alone of all the Caspian states has defined its boundaries (with Russia, Azerbaijan, and Turkmenistan).

¹⁰ N. Nazarbayev, op. cit., p. 124.

¹¹ See: Sh. Abilov, “Legal Status of the Caspian,” *Hazar Raporu*, No. 4, Summer 2013, pp. 123-143.

¹² N. Nazarbayev, op. cit., p. 125.

¹³ See: “Pravovoi status Kaspiiskogo moria,” available at [<http://mfa.gov.kz/ru/content-view/pravovoj-status-kaspijskogo-morya>].

¹⁴ C. Frappi, A. Garibov, *The Caspian Sea Chessboard: Geo-political, Geo-strategic and Geo-economic Analysis*, Egea Press, Milano, 2014, p. 37.

¹⁵ G. Abdurakhmanov, G. Monakhova, A. Aldabayev, G. Akhmedova, “Granitsy na Kaspiiskom more v sootvetstvii s basseinovym printsypom,” *Yug Rossii: ekologiya, razvitiye*, No. 4, 2008, pp. 130-133.

The 2003 Framework Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Caspian Sea

The Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Caspian Sea, also known as the Tehran Convention, was signed by representatives of the Caspian littoral states in November 2003 and entered into force on 12 August, 2006. It was the first legally binding document signed by all five littoral countries. Its main purpose is to ensure the environmental safety of the Caspian and to protect its natural resources from pollution in the process of hydrocarbon production.¹⁶

“The first legal step towards mutual protection of the Caspian environment was the adoption in 1994 of the Almaty Declaration on Cooperation [in the field] of the Environmental Protection of the Caspian Sea Region. Since the break-up of the Soviet Union there have been a lot of divergent concepts of solving the current legal challenges to the Caspian Sea including environmental protection. Until today mutual negotiations among the coastal states have proved to be successful only regarding the issue of the protection of the Caspian environment.

“At the end of the conference in Tehran in November 2003 the Caspian littoral states signed a Final Act, of which the Framework Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Caspian Sea (Tehran Convention) constitutes Annex 2.

“The Tehran Convention entered into force on 12 August, 2006 after being accepted by all Caspian littoral states. Until now three additional protocols: Aktau Protocol (2011), LBSA (Land-based Sources and Activities.—*Ed.*) Protocol (2012), and Biodiversity Protocol (2014) have been adopted, but have not entered into force yet. Aktau Protocol has been ratified by Azerbaijan, Iran, Russian Federation and Turkmenistan. LBSA Protocol has been ratified by Azerbaijan and Iran. As the name suggests, the “Framework Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Caspian Sea” is aimed at environmental protection of the Caspian Sea. The Tehran Convention (Art 4) includes states’ general obligations related to taking individually or jointly all appropriate measures to prevent pollution of the Caspian Sea and to protect the environment of the Caspian Sea.”¹⁷

The commissions on shipping, fishing, and the protection of marine life, water, and airspace have also achieved successes, and the signing of the 2003 Tehran Convention, aimed at protecting life in the Caspian Sea, by all five littoral states is a case in point.¹⁸

One should note the contribution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, which made a considerable effort in undertaking commitments and hosted the Conference of Plenipotentiaries for Adoption and Signature of the Framework Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Caspian Sea, assuming the full responsibility for its organization. Iran also acted as the depositary of the Convention.¹⁹

¹⁶ See: Y. Ongarova, *The Role of Caspian Energy Resources in Kazakh Foreign Policy (PhD thesis)*, Sakarya University, Sakarya, Department of International Relations, 2015, p. 28.

¹⁷ B. Janusz-Pawletta, *The Legal Status of the Caspian Sea: Current Challenges and Prospects for Future Development*, Springer-Verlag Press, Berlin, 2015, p. 44.

¹⁸ See: M. Gökçe, “The Caspian Sea Politics of Iran from the Pre-Cold War Era,” *The Pursuit of History*, Journal of International History and Social Researches, No. 6, 2011, pp. 153-176.

¹⁹ See: A. Butayev, A. Gadzhiev, “Sovremennoe sostoianie i vozmozhnoe napravlenie razvitiya ekosistemy Kaspiiskogo moria,” *Vestnik DNTs RAN*, No. 4, 1999, pp. 85-95.

As a result of the third meeting of the Conference of the Parties in Aktau on 10-12 August, 2011, in accordance with the requirements of the Tehran Convention, the parties signed a Protocol on regional cooperation in the event of oil pollution of the Caspian Sea.²⁰

The Caspian Sea is a landlocked body of water with large-scale and constantly increasing offshore drilling, exploration and production of oil and gas, as well as steadily growing transportation of oil by pipeline and vessel. All of this poses a serious threat to the ecosystem of the Caspian. In view of this, the Caspian states drafted, with the assistance of international environmental organizations, a number of agreements on environmental protection of the Caspian: on the conservation and use of its biological resources; on the protection of its natural environment; on the establishment of a commission for the conservation and use of its aquatic biological resources; and on cooperation between the Caspian states in hydrometeorology and environmental monitoring; they also drafted a Framework Convention to protect the environment of the Caspian Sea and the population of the coastal zone.²¹

An Analysis of Caspian Summits

2002 Summit, Ashgabat

The first Caspian Summit on 23-24 April, 2002 was meant to resolve the problems that existed in the Caspian region and bring the parties to an agreement on the Convention on the Legal Status of the Caspian Sea.²² But the summit was a failure, once again highlighting the significant differences in the positions and approaches of the countries concerned, although all of them agreed that the problem of the Caspian's legal status had to be solved step by step, taking into account the interests of all five Caspian countries.

The main obstacle was Iran's insistence that the sea should be divided into five equal parts. But the other littoral states categorically refused to accept this, arguing that the waters and seabed should be divided into national sectors based on the length of the coastline. The scandal that broke out between Saparmurat Niyazov and Heydar Aliyev, the then presidents of Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan, did not contribute to the success of the summit either. It was caused by the dispute over the status of three oil fields in the center of the Caspian. But although the five heads of state failed to reach an understanding on the whole range of issues, they outlined the key areas of work on existing problems and decided to hold the second Caspian Summit in Tehran in 2003.

But instead of a summit in 2003, Tehran hosted the above-mentioned Conference of Plenipotentiaries at which the five countries signed the Framework Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Caspian Sea, while the second summit took place only in 2007.

During that time, Russia and Kazakhstan developed protocols to their Agreement on the Delimitation of the Seabed of the Northern Part of the Caspian Sea; Russia and Azerbaijan signed an Agreement on the Delimitation of Adjacent Areas of the Caspian Seabed (23 September, 2002); and Russia, Azerbaijan, and Kazakhstan signed a trilateral Agreement on the Junction Point of the Lines Delimiting Adjacent Areas of the Caspian Seabed (14 May, 2003). These documents provided the legal framework for the development and exploitation of mineral resources in the northern part of the Caspian seabed.

²⁰ See: "Prikaspiiskie gosudarstva razrabotaiut natsionalnye plany deistvii po zashchite Kaspiiskogo moria," available at [<http://www.aktai-busines.com/2012/12/14/zashita.html>].

²¹ See: B. Sarsenbayev, *op. cit.*

²² See: S. Chernitsyna, "Problemy Kaspiiskogo regiona: regionalnye i globalnye aspekty," *Obozrevatel-Observers*, No. 12, 2014, p. 97.

2007 Summit, Tehran

The agreements signed after the Ashgabat Summit enabled the Caspian states to outline an agenda for the second Caspian Summit, which took place in Tehran on 16 October, 2007.

In his speech at the opening of the summit, President Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan said that Kazakhstan adhered to the principle of dividing the sea into internal waters, territorial waters (at least 12 nautical miles), fishing zones (25-30 nautical miles), and common waters. According to the Kazakh leader, this variant is the most suitable one, because it takes into account the interests of all five littoral states. The outer limit of territorial waters should be regarded as the state boundary, and within this boundary the littoral state should have full sovereignty. Within the limits of the fishing zones, all fishing rights should belong to the respective states. On the high seas, the littoral states should enjoy freedom of fishing within their quota.

The second Caspian Summit addressed the following issues:

- definition of the status and boundaries of internal waters and 12-nautical mile territorial waters in the Caspian;
- definition of the maximum breadth of territorial waters for each littoral state for the purpose of ensuring the exclusive authority and defining the state boundaries of the littoral states;
- legal regulation of interaction between the Caspian states in the use, protection, and restoration of the biological resources of the Caspian Sea;
- conclusion of a Convention on the Legal Status of the Caspian Sea, including provisions defining the rights of the landlocked Caspian states to free use of all means of transport for access to other seas and oceans.

The summit ended with the signing of a declaration setting forth the approaches to the development of the Convention on the Legal Status of the Caspian Sea shared by all parties.²³ In addition, the Caspian states agreed that non-littoral states had no right to use the Caspian basin for military purposes and that the littoral states could not use military force against their neighbors in the Caspian basin.

That Caspian Summit accelerated the process of consultations between the littoral states. Another result was the signing of the Final Declaration, which said that only the littoral states had sovereign rights over the Caspian Sea and its resources.

The parties also agreed to hold regular meetings of the heads of Caspian states and, in the periods between them, meetings of foreign ministers and authorized experts to address the whole range of issues related to the Caspian Sea.

It is quite obvious that the Caspian vector of economic policy remains attractive to the Islamic Republic of Iran. As projected by the Iranian authorities, trade between the Caspian countries should total \$15-20 billion a year by 2025. These forecasts are evidence of Iran's intentions to take all necessary measures to maintain and strengthen its influence in the Caspian region.²⁴

2010 Summit, Baku

The third Caspian Summit met in Baku in November 2010. At that summit, the parties signed an Agreement on Security Cooperation in the Caspian Sea, whose purpose was to fight terrorism,

²³ See: A.B. Medikhanova, "Politika Respubliki Kazakhstan v Kaspiiskom regione: osnovnye napravleniia," *Mezhdunarodnye issledovania. Obshchestvo. Politika. Ekonomika*, No. 4 (13), 2012, p. 24 [<http://www.opinions.kz/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/2012-4-13-%D0%9C%D0%98.pdf>].

²⁴ See: L. Parkhomchik, "Sovremennaia politika Irana v Kaspiiskom regione," *Problemy postsovetskogo prostranstva*, No. 1, 2014, pp. 37-49.

poaching, smuggling, and organized crime. On that occasion, the heads of state did not discuss the principles for dividing the waters, seabed, and subsoil of the Caspian, but reformulated some approaches to the resolution of specific issues so as to expedite the signing of the Convention on the Legal Status of the Caspian Sea.²⁵ Speaking at the summit, President Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan said it was necessary to draw attention to the protection and restoration of biological resources in the Caspian. Given the catastrophic decline in sturgeon stocks and the critical situation in this field, Kazakhstan proposed a temporary five-sided moratorium on sturgeon fishing for at least five years. The head of state said that the solution of this problem required a scientific and legal approach, which would intensify the efforts to protect the regional environment and the fight against poaching.²⁶

The summit resulted in the signing of the Agreement on Security Cooperation in the Caspian Sea between the five states. The parties signed a number of important documents, including joint declarations on the status of the Caspian Sea; made special provision for a five-year ban on sturgeon fishing; and agreed to discuss the sovereign rights of the littoral states in the waters of the Caspian and to prepare for signing, within a period of three months, a document on 24-25 nautical mile marine zones.

It was decided that the fourth summit would be hosted by Russia. The parties also agreed to hold annual summits (although, as we will see below, this arrangement was implemented only later), with meetings of foreign ministers and authorized experts between them.

The Baku Summit demonstrated the willingness of the leaders of the five Caspian countries to engage in joint activities in the Caspian Sea, to coordinate and plan regional cooperation. In addition, the parties agreed to intensify their efforts to conclude a Convention on the Legal Status of the Caspian Sea and to hold meetings of the Special Working Group five times a year. That proposal was discussed at every meeting of the Commission on Aquatic Bioresources of the Caspian Sea and was supported by the presidents of the Caspian states throughout the whole of 2011.²⁷

2014 Summit, Astrakhan

The leaders of the Caspian states met for their fourth summit on 29 September 2014. As expected, the signing of the Convention on the Legal Status of the Caspian Sea was not on its agenda. Several days earlier, Yuri Ushakov, Aide to the President of the Russian Federation, mentioned that the Convention would be ready for signing by the next summit in 2015. But President Nursultan Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan and Russian President Vladimir Putin noted the considerable progress made in preparing that document as one of the main outcomes of the summit. The positive atmosphere enabled the leaders of the five countries to adopt a political Statement in which they proclaimed the following:

- mutual recognition of the national sovereignty of each party over its coastal marine space not exceeding 15 nautical miles;
- mutual recognition of the exclusive rights of each party to exploit aquatic biological resources in a 10 nautical mile zone beyond its coastal marine space.

Thus, one of the achievements of the Astrakhan Summit was the definition of exclusive economic zones. The sovereignty of a littoral state extends to a 15-mile belt of sea, and in the 10-mile

²⁵ See: S. Chernitsyna, *op. cit.*, p. 98.

²⁶ See: A.B. Medikhanova, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

²⁷ See: S. Musa, "Pravovoi status Kaspia," *Egemen Kazakhstan*, 23 November 2017 [<https://egemen.kz/article/161619-qart-kaspiydinh-quqyqyq-martebes-qashan-ayqyndalady>].

zone adjacent to it the state has the exclusive right to exploit marine resources. The remaining sea surface is left for common use by the littoral states, while the seabed and subsoil have yet to be divided. Naturally, this opens the way to further disputes.²⁸

At the summit, President Nazarbayev made a proposal to declare the Caspian region a free trade area until the signing of the draft Convention and to set up a regional center for cross-border cooperation.²⁹

The political Statement adopted at the fourth Caspian Summit set out a number of important agreements reached by the five presidents: on the non-presence in the Caspian Sea of military forces not belonging to the Caspian states; on each country's national sovereignty over a 15-nautical mile coastal marine space and its exclusive right to exploit aquatic bioresources in a further 10-mile zone adjacent to the coastal marine space; on freedom of navigation beyond the waters under national sovereignty, etc.³⁰

The ban on the military presence of non-littoral states in the Caspian Sea runs counter to the previous approach taken by Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan to the deployment of a NATO military base in the coastal area.

For the first time in the 24 years after the breakup of the Soviet Union, the Caspian countries came close to signing the Convention on the Legal Status of the Caspian Sea. That was an important event in international affairs, because the oil and gas reserves of the Caspian have raised the issue of its status to the level of a global political problem.³¹

2018 Summit, Kazakhstan

The agenda of the next summit could include the issue of joint efforts by the Caspian states to ensure security, in other words, the establishment of a joint navy. In particular, with the growing importance of the Caspian factor for Iran's power industry, its sea- and land-based oil and gas infrastructure facilities will require greater protection. The use of this argument to build up their own naval forces in the Caspian is also characteristic of other littoral states. It should be noted that the Russian and Iranian attitudes to regional security are largely similar. At different times, both states suggested drafting a separate political document for pooling the efforts of the Caspian Five in the fight against terrorism, drug trafficking, and other threats to stability.³² The idea of developing a stability pact for the Caspian region was expressed by the foreign minister of the Republic of Kazakhstan at the 19th meeting of the Special Working Group on the Development of the Convention on the Legal Status of the Caspian Sea on 22 November, 2005. Iran in turn suggested concluding an agreement on confidence-building measures and stability. But the Agreement on Security Cooperation in the Caspian Sea, signed at the third Caspian Summit in Baku in 2010, did not stop the process of its militarization, with all countries of the region without exception taking an active part in this process. The potential threat of a rise in military tensions on the shores of the Caspian in the event of an escalation

²⁸ See: "Obsuzhdenie pravovogo statusa Kaspiiskogo moria mezhdru Rossiei i Kazakhstanov," 1 September, 2016, available at [<http://ia-centr.ru/publications/23903/>].

²⁹ See: I. Sevostyanova, "Konventsia o pravom statuse Kaspia budet podpisana v 2017 godu," 13 July, 2016, available at [<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uzp4YJH-Kho>].

³⁰ See: A. Nursha, "Kaspiiskoie more v zerkale siriiskogo krizisa," *Kazakhstan v globalnykh protsessakh*, No. 4, 2015, pp. 14-24.

³¹ See: O. Martynyuk, "Kaspiiski proryv," 15 October, 2014, available at [<http://www.m-astana.kz/article/view?id=1791>].

³² See: "Otsenka situatsii v regione Kaspiiskogo moria v sentiabre 2011 goda," 25 October, 2011, available at [<http://www.casfactor.com/rus/editor/18.html>].

of the U.S.-Iran conflict compels Tehran to closely monitor the combat readiness status of the navies of other Caspian states.

Russia's involvement in the armed conflict in Syria, primarily the Russian missile strikes against targets in Syria launched from the Caspian Sea, has set a serious undesirable precedent and has put Kazakhstan in a difficult situation. Russia and to some extent Iran have been making considerable efforts to keep the region closed to the military activities of the rest of the world. Moreover, while taking part in armed conflicts in the Middle East, they have been trying to nudge the region towards military integration. At the fifth presidential summit of Caspian states, which was scheduled for 2017 but was postponed to 2018, Kazakhstan will have to take this situation into account in its diplomacy.³³

The next Caspian Summit is to be held in Kazakhstan in the second half of 2018. As Kazakhstan's Foreign Minister Kairat Abdrakhmanov said in this context at the beginning of the year, the countries of the Caspian region are in the process of negotiating the Convention on the Legal Status of the Caspian. "Today, we are waiting for all parties to complete their national procedures, whereupon we will set the date for the summit. These procedures are likely to take quite a long time, several months, which is why the summit will probably take place in the second half of this year," he said.³⁴

On 5 December, 2017, the foreign ministers of the Caspian states met in Moscow. At a press briefing after the meeting, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said that the draft Convention on the Legal Status of the Caspian Sea was ready for signing and was expected to be signed during the Caspian Summit in Kazakhstan in 2018.³⁵

The successful completion of the foreign ministers' meeting on 5 December may have marked the beginning of a new era. The Convention should provide the basis for future relations between the five littoral states concerning the Caspian Sea and ensure the development of the whole Caspian region. For example, its signing will open the way for foreign investment in the region. In Kazakhstan, the effect from the Convention will primarily be felt in the ports of Aktau, Bautino, and Kuryk.

President Nazarbayev, owing to his experience and political activity, tries to organize every international event in the republic with maximum efficiency and productivity. That is why it is safe to say that Kazakhstan diplomats will try very hard to achieve significant results. At the same time, serious difficulties still remain. The main obstacle is the position of Iran. Tehran continues to insist that, in the event of sectoral division of the seabed, the five littoral states should get equal shares (20% each). It is difficult to say how this can be achieved, given the Azerbaijan deposits already under development. There is also the remaining dispute between Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan over the Kapaz/Serdar border oil field. In addition, the parties have different views on trans-Caspian infrastructure projects. Russia and Iran insist that any cross-border pipeline projects in the Caspian should take into account the opinions of all parties, because its environment is very vulnerable and man-made disasters will affect all littoral states. As for Turkmenistan, it has consistently maintained its position on the possibility of building a trans-Caspian pipeline without the agreement of its neighbors.³⁶

Kazakhstan has been trying to resolve problems with other littoral states by diplomatic means, without conflict, supporting approaches based on mutual cooperation with these states.

³³ See: A. Nursha, op. cit., p. 18.

³⁴ See: *Kazakhstanskaia pravda*, 15 February, 2018.

³⁵ See: "Pravovoi status Kaspia na fone spornykh momentov," 14 April, 2018, available at [<https://rus.azattyq.org/a/kaspiy-more-pravovoy-status-alkey-margulan/28907620.html>].

³⁶ See: "Kaspiiskoie more v tsentre vseobshchego vnimania," 10 May, 2017, available at [<https://camonitor.kz/20936-kaspiyskoe-more-v-centre-vseobschego-vnimaniya.html>].

The Strategy Behind Kazakhstan's Diplomatic Initiatives in the Period from 1998 to 2017

Since independence, rich oil and gas deposits have been discovered in the territory of Kazakhstan. The country is believed to have the largest reserves in the Caspian basin. Through the use of hydrocarbon resources, Kazakhstan seeks to act as regional leader in Central Asia.³⁷ The solution of the problem of the Caspian Sea's legal status is among Kazakhstan's strategic goals.³⁸ "In the difficult situation of 1992-1993, the Caspian countries expected that the abundant resources of the Caspian would help them improve their economic and sociopolitical position to a considerable extent. But without a clear definition of the legal status of the Caspian Sea and the national sectors of adjacent countries, they could not start exploration and drilling works or attract foreign investors with full and maximum participation. That is why right after the breakup of the U.S.S.R. and Kazakhstan's independence, our foreign policy department initiated talks between the Caspian states on the legal status of the Caspian Sea. That was one of the most important problems I closely monitored. We defined our main task: Kazakhstan should have a legal right, recognized by all Caspian states and the world community, to develop the national resources of the Kazakh sector of the Caspian."³⁹ "Kazakhstan has the Caspian Sea region's largest recoverable crude oil reserves and its production accounts for approximately two-thirds of the region's overall output. It is important to point out that Kazakhstan claims the largest share of the Caspian Sea, which includes most of the Basin's biggest known oil fields: Tengiz, Karachaganak, Kurmangazy, and Kashagan. These fields have been developed by international oil companies. Since independence in 1992, Kazakhstan has aggressively pursued foreign investment. For the last several years, the national oil company Kazmunaigaz (formerly KazakhOil) has signed several schemes with foreign investors to develop the country's oil and gas deposits,"⁴⁰ Bahgat writes. In this process, the country seeks to reconcile its interests with those of the other littoral states, with the targets set by each of the parties. The new status should establish the optimal regime for the rational use of the resources of the Caspian's unique ecosystem, as well as for the extraction and refining of its oil. Nazarbayev reminded in this context that "Kazakhstan is a landlocked country. Ranking as the ninth-largest country in the world in terms of area, we have no access to the World Ocean. Kazakhstan's economic development depends not only on our reserves of oil and gas, but also on the creation of favorable conditions for their transportation. That is why we are interested in harmonizing international relations in the region and establishing close cooperation with our Caspian partners. Our main partner is, of course, Russia. Kazakhstan's oil exports pass almost entirely through the Russian pipeline system."⁴¹

Nazarbayev's statements show that the issue of the status of the Caspian Sea is among the top priorities of Kazakhstan diplomacy. Ever since independence, Kazakhstan has actively supported Caspian initiatives. The fifth Caspian Summit is to be held in Kazakhstan, where the parties are expected to sign the final Convention. With this aim in view, Kazakhstan has been looking for ways to reach agreement on various problems. Bulat Sarsenbayev noted in this context: "All the Caspian states are striving for peaceful co-existence," in accordance with international and political declarations. They "understand that the Caspian is their common property, seeing their task as harmonizing each other's rights to the sea, taking account of national interests, justice and rational compromise.

³⁷ See: Ya. Özdemir, op. cit., p. 19.

³⁸ See: K. Tokayev, *Pod stiagom nezavisimosti: ocherki o vneshnei politike Kazakhstana*, Bilim, Almaty, 1997, p. 33.

³⁹ N. Nazarbayev, op. cit., p. 121.

⁴⁰ G. Bahgat, "Prospects for Energy Cooperation in the Caspian Sea," 8 February, 2017, available at [<http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0967067X07000165>].

⁴¹ "Kak nam podelit Kaspii," 3 October, 2002, available at [<http://izvestia.ru/news/267931>].

The Caspian states do not plan to solve the status problem by warlike methods. The Caspian is a landlocked body of water.”⁴²

At present, Kazakhstan crude oil moves along several corridors: Tengiz-Novorossiysk and Atyrau-Samara routes to Russia; Atasu-Alashankou pipeline to China in the east; and Azerbaijan pipelines in the west.⁴³ It is also planned to use the north-south transport corridor with a railway route running from Kazakhstan through Turkmenistan and then on to Golestan Province in Iran, where it will be linked to the national network connected with ports in the Persian Gulf. At a 2014 summit in Kazakhstan, President Nazarbayev declared his intention to support the project of a railway from Russia running around the Caspian Sea to Kazakhstan and then on through Turkmenistan and Iran to the ports of the Persian Gulf.⁴⁴ In order that Kazakhstan may use its abundant resources in the Caspian Sea freely and fully, it is necessary to resolve the problem of its legal status. In this context, the multi-vector diplomacy that is traditional to independent Kazakhstan is a crucial and inevitable foreign policy strategy.

Conclusions

Despite the meetings held and the conventions signed over the years, the problem of the legal status of the Caspian Sea has yet to be resolved. Only the boundaries of Kazakhstan have been defined. Other littoral states pursue their own interests, which are difficult to reconcile. Kazakhstan, like the other littoral states, has taken its own approach. By the end of 2001, three of the five Caspian states had agreed to accept the “divided seabed, common waters” formula in delimiting the Caspian Sea. Accordingly, one can say that the legal status issue is half resolved. But a consensus among all Caspian states has yet to be reached.

Once the legal status issue is resolved, the Caspian Sea will be given a new definition in accordance with the norms of international law. The definition of the legal status of the Caspian is important for conducting safety reviews, maintaining the biodiversity of the sea, developing the seabed, and building transport and logistics infrastructure. The Convention is scheduled to be signed at the fifth Caspian Summit in Kazakhstan in 2018. If this happens, it will be an important achievement for Astana. It is also planned to discuss security measures in the Caspian Sea in connection with the Syrian conflict. Finally, the leader of Kazakhstan is expected to continue, in negotiations with his colleagues, his multi-vector policy as the country’s invariable foreign policy strategy designed to ensure the development of balanced relations with neighboring states and to avoid political conflicts.

⁴² B. Sarsenbayev, op. cit., p. 3.

⁴³ See: V. Kotilko, “Stsenarii sozdania Organizatsii kaspiskogo ekonomicheskogo sotrudnichestva,” *Strategia razvitiia ekonomiki*, No. 11, 2011, pp. 19-33.

⁴⁴ See: R. Usmanov, “Gosudarstvennoe i munitsipalnoe upravlenie,” *Uchonye Zapiski SKAGS*, No. 3, 2015, pp. 58-64.

KAZAKHSTAN AND CHINA: THE PROBLEM OF TRANSBOUNDARY RIVERS

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ABSTRACT

About twenty rivers cross the Sino-Kazakh border, the biggest of them being the Ili and the Irtysh. For several years running, China has been steadily increasing water withdrawal, pushing Kazakhstan and the Russian part of Siberia towards an ecological disaster. This makes negotiations a must for both countries, yet Beijing prefers to talk separately to Moscow and Astana. In recent years, Kazakhstan and China have

added more vigor to their cooperation on water-related issues: they have already signed a great number of agreements and set up workgroups and commissions, yet mutually acceptable solutions are nowhere in sight. In this paper we have assessed what has been done to move closer to water-related agreements and in which way the joint structures bring the sides closer to relatively rational use of water resources.

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KEYWORDS: *China, Kazakhstan, water resources, transboundary rivers, Ili, Irtysh.*

Introduction

Water knows no political borders; this means that water management is one of the permanent factors of interstate relations. Conflicts are resolved through numerous agreements, yet tension remains. In most cases, management of transboundary water resources and security issues are intertwined, which means that the sides should try to avoid water-related conflicts and demonstrate efficiency when dealing with them.

The geographic location of China and Kazakhstan suggests that they should manage their water resources jointly and pay special attention to the water intake from the Ili and Irtysh rivers.

The experts on both sides of the border have very different ideas about water-related issues. Seen from Kazakhstan, water intake on the Chinese side seems to be a security threat, while Chinese experts are convinced that the official statements of Kazakhstan are caused by inefficient water management on its side of the border.

The authors have analyzed how bilateral Sino-Kazakhstan relations were unfolding in the sphere of water withdrawal from the transboundary rivers to answer the question of whether water intake and ecological security are a stumbling block in the relationships between the two countries or a chance to deepen their bilateral relations.

1. What Transboundary Rivers Mean for China

At the turn of the 1980s, China increased its water intake from the Irtysh, while the very different approaches to the issue of Moscow and Beijing made an interstate agreement impossible.

Thirty out of thirty-two Chinese megapolises are water-deficient; “over half of the Chinese cities” survive in the conditions of a permanent water shortage.¹

In 1990, China started its Project 635: a 300 km-long and 22 meter-wide canal between the Black Irtysh and Karamay rivers to bring water from the upper reaches of the Irtysh to the Ulungur Lake. Today, the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region of China pours between 10 and 40% of the Irtysh runoff into its agriculture and industry. This water has added about 140,000 hectares to the irrigated agricultural lands and is used by the industrial enterprises of the Karamay oil basin.²

The strategic development plan for China’s western regions adopted in 1999³ threw the gap between the scarcity of natural resources and the ambitions of Chinese leaders into bold relief.

Today, China extracts about 500 million cubic meters of water every year; in 2020, when the project is completed it will withdraw up to 1 bcm with negative or extremely negative effects for the

¹ See: V. Gelbras, “Rossia i Kitay: voprosy sobirania geoeconomicheskikh prostranstv,” *Polis*, No. 6, 1995, pp. 44-45.

² See: M. Laruelle, S. Peyrouse, *The Chinese Question in Central Asia. Domestic Order, Social Change and the Chinese Factor*, Hurst & Company, London, 2012.

³ See: Y. Zhanghuai, Z. Zheyang, Ch. Weishan, “Per Capita GDP of Tianjin, Beijing, Shanghai Reaches Level of Wealthy Countries,” *Current Digest of the Chinese Press*, No. 9, 2012, pp. 18-20.

economy and the social sphere of Kazakhstan and the Russian regions along the Ob, of which the Irtysh is the main tributary.⁴

China uses the rivers of the Ili basin to irrigate 400,000 hectares and plans to increase the irrigated area to 600,000 hectares.⁵ Xinjiang has already acquired the Kapchagay Reservoir 15 km above the spot where the Tekes flows into the Ili. Construction began in 2001; today the water storage of 1.2 bcm has been filled practically to capacity. The Chinese side insists that it needs the reservoir to irrigate agricultural lands, produce electric power and, moreover, protect Kazakhstan from floods and mud flows. We should bear in mind, however, that the People's Republic of China controls 100% of water that reaches Kazakhstan from the Ili.⁶

Today, China is talking about a 174 meter-high dam on the Kunges with the flow volume of 6 bcm. The project of a drainage channel from the Ili to the Tarim in the south of XUAR looks like a potential headache. A drainage channel on the Ili River is under construction. It will begin at Kensai (the Ili Kazakh Autonomous Prefecture), cross the Boro-Khoro pass to reach Jing, not far from the Boro-tala city (the Bortala Mongol Autonomous Prefecture). It comprises a big dam and a three-stage hydropower station; it is also planned to channel the water of the Ili tributaries—the Tekes, Kunges and Kash rivers—to the drying out salt Ebi Lake in the Bortala Mongol Autonomous Prefecture. In the near future, water intake from the Ili might reach 70% of the water flow.⁷

2. What Transboundary Rivers Mean for Kazakhstan

The Irtysh and the Ili are two out of three navigable rivers in Kazakhstan. Both are an important source of fresh water; both are very important for the republic's economy and, together with the Irtysh-Karaganda channel, they bring drinking water to the cities of Astana, Karaganda, Semipalatinsk, Pavlodar, Ekibastuz, Temirtau and the agricultural lands of Central Kazakhstan.⁸ If the water level drops lower, the production potential of the Bukhtarma, Ust-Kamenogorsk and Shulbinsk hydropower stations along the Irtysh will at best drop; at worst, they may be stopped altogether.

China's increased water intake has already lowered the water level of the Ili River with even graver economic, social and sociological consequences for the southeast of Kazakhstan and the rest of the country. Indeed, the Ili brings 80% of the total water flow to Lake Balkhash, the world's fifteenth largest lake. The river abounds in fish; its delta is a hunting place for muskrats.⁹ In Kazakhstan the river is navigable from the state border to Bakanas; in its lower reaches boats are used. The Ili and its tributaries are highly important for irrigation. The Ulken-Almaty canal (between Shilik and Shemolgan) is used for irrigation, pasture watering and for everyday, industrial and hydropower purposes.¹⁰

⁴ See: M. Laruelle, S. Peyrouse, op. cit.

⁵ See: G. Zholamanova, "Rol Shanghayskoy organizatsii sotrudnichestva v uregulirovani problemu transgranichnykh rek mezhdru Kazakhstanom i Kitaem," *Analytic*, No. 1, 2007, pp. 35-36.

⁶ See: T. Baymukhambetov, "Vodianaia melnitsa zaskripela: vialotekushchie kazakhstano-kitayskie peregovory o transgranichnykh rekakh sdvinulis s mertvoy tochki?" *Ekspres-K*, 245(16393), 2008.

⁷ See: D. Rakhmetov, "Besprosvetny vodozabor," *V[o]x Populi*, No. 9, 2009, pp. 41-42.

⁸ See: "Transgranichnoe sotrudnichestvo na mezhduarodnykh rekakh: problemy, opyt, uroki, prognozy ekspertov," available at [http://www.cawater-info.net/bk/water_law/8_3.htm].

⁹ Ibidem.

¹⁰ See: A.E. Baymaganbetov, "Opreделение osnovnykh parametrov selevykh potokov nekotorykh vodotokov, peresekaiushchikh trassu Bolshogo Almatinskogo Kanala im. Kunaeva," available at [<http://repo.kstu.kz:8080/xmlui/bitstream/handle/123456789/1735/Баймаганбетов%20Опр%20осн%20пара%20селе%20потков%20некот%20водот%20пере%20трассу.pdf?sequence=1>].

There is the Akdala irrigation region with the total area of about 30 thousand hectares, 10 thousand hectares being used for rice cultivation.¹¹

The Kapchagay hydropower station on the Ili supplies the republic's south with desperately needed electric power. The water of the Ili is the main source of irrigation in the Almaty Region, where technical cultures are grown in large quantities.

The above means that a lower water level in the transboundary rivers, unbalanced ecological systems, irrational use of water by the local people might deteriorate their living conditions, slow down economic growth of the entire country and even cause ecological catastrophes.

In the absence of clear-cut international standards and criteria for the use of transboundary river water resources, the problem is growing even more complicated than it looks at first glance. The existing documents—the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context and the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes are related mainly to environmental aspects and touch upon the water problem in passing. The Helsinki Rules on the Uses of the Waters of International Rivers and the protocols to it (the London Protocol on Water and Health and the Kiev Protocol on Civil Liability and Compensation for Damage Caused by the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents on Transboundary Waters) are similar to the above-mentioned conventions.

3. Water Talks between Kazakhstan and China: Main Stages

The problem of joint use of the transboundary river water figures prominently in bilateral negotiations. So far, they have gone through three main stages.

3.1. The First Stage (1992-1999): The Problem of Transboundary Rivers is Actualized in the Kazakhstan Discourse

From the first days of its independence, Kazakhstan has been talking about the redistribution of water resources of transboundary rivers as ecologically risky. Many international environmental organizations, UNDP among them, sided with Kazakhstan in its disagreements with China. It was absolutely clear that the decreased runoff from the Ili may bring Lake Balkhash on the brink of disaster comparable to that which had happened to the Sea of Aral.¹²

Fully aware of the threats, the republican authorities and the public were actively discussing possible solutions.¹³ By 1992, the problem of transboundary rivers was high up on the list of priorities for the republic's leaders. They offered the Chinese side a list of suggestions related to the officially registered principles of joint and rational use of transboundary water resources.

Two years later, Kazakhstan laid on the table a draft of an intergovernmental agreement on cooperation in navigation on transboundary rivers to promote foreign trade and tourist exchange. It

¹¹ See: K.M. Kurmashev, M.Kh. Sarsenbaev, "Vodny balans Akdalinskogo massiva oroshenia," available at [<http://nblib.library.kz/elib/library.kz/journal/Kurmashev%20Sarsenbaev.pdf>].

¹² See: M. Laruelle, S. Peyrouse, *op. cit.*

¹³ See: "Vlasti Pavlodara prosiat spasti ot obmelenia reku Irtysh," available at [<http://www.zakon.kz/4489383-vlasti-pavlodara-prosjat-spasti-ot.html>].

took Beijing five years to study the draft; meanwhile, Kazakhstan persistently invited the Chinese side to the negotiation table: the catastrophic economic and ecological effects of China's one-sided increase of water intake from the Ili and the Irtysh had become obvious.¹⁴

In 1997, the CC of the CPC approved an important initiative from below: the timetable of the "reversal" of the Black Irtysh based on Project 635 endorsed by the XUAR government named 1 October, 1999 as the projected date of the project's completion. The Ili and the Tekes, two other transboundary rivers, were identified as the next objects.

Late in 1998, the Ust-Kamenogorsk maslikhat voiced its great concern over the news that, contrary to earlier information about a canal, China was digging a 20 meter-wide drainage channel to bring drinking water to central Xinjiang and to supply the Karamay oil fields with water for industrial needs. The Chinese expected to retain 20% of the total runoff of the Black Irtysh. According to Kazakhstan ecologists, the loss of 5 to 6% of the runoff would put an end to Lake Zaysan and the Bukhtarma Reservoir.

3.2. The Second Stage (1999-2009): Kazakhstan and China Start Talking; A Joint Commission on Transboundary Rivers is Set Up

In January 1999, deputies of the Majilis (parliament) of Kazakhstan joined the discussion. When invited to one of the sessions, the Foreign Minister of Kazakhstan Kassym Tokayev offered no details: he explained that there was no treaty in place between the two countries, yet the negotiations on the transboundary rivers were going on unabated.

In March 1999, speaking at the Institute of Eastern Europe and Central Asia of the Academy of Social Sciences of the PRC Ambassador of Kazakhstan to China, Kuanysh Sultanov, cautiously touched upon the problem of transboundary rivers. He pointed out that according to world practice and international laws, the issues related to the joint use of similar objects should be discussed; the sides should arrive at coordinated plans and programs and sign documents. He referred to the case of the Danube that flowed across at least half of the European states, never causing serious problems. The audience, comprised of Chinese academics and officials, paid attention; the press service of the Chinese Foreign Ministry reported that Chinese scholars had agreed that continued postponement of the talks would do no good to international relations.

During the 1999 visit of President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev to China the Kazakhstan leaders once again voiced their deep concerns regarding the problem and strongly objected to the steadily decreasing runoff of the Black Irtysh.

Talks began in May 1999; the sides set up a Joint Workgroup of experts on transboundary rivers.

Persistence of the Kazakhstan diplomats was rewarded with considerable progress. Bigaliy Turarbekov, Councilor of the Foreign Ministry of Kazakhstan who supervised the process admitted that "Beijing demonstrated understanding ... earlier the Chinese side had pretended that the problem had not existed. It finally agreed that the use of transboundary rivers on one side of the border should not inflict losses on the other side." The Chinese Embassy to Kazakhstan and the Foreign Ministry of People's Republic of China confirmed that China had embraced new approaches to the issue.¹⁵

¹⁴ See: N. Aydarov, "O kazakhstano-kitayskom peregovornom protsesse po transgranichnym rekam," *Diplomaticheskyy kurier*, No. 2, 2000, pp. 102-104.

¹⁵ See: A. Mukhambediayeva, "Kazakhstan-Kitay: reshenie vodnoy problemy opyat otkladyvaetsia," *Agentstvo politicheskikh issledovaniy*, available at [<http://www.caapr.kz/show.php.kza1104-01.htm>].

After several rounds of talks and meetings of the workgroups that discussed the problems of the joint use of transboundary rivers, the two sides' positions moved closer. They registered the volumes of China's water intake, coordinated the criteria of the assessment of water quality, etc.

Despite the fact that the process has not achieved the final aim, the signed agreement can be described as a positive outcome of diplomatic effort that determines the future of the relationship between the two states and serves as a firm foundation on which disagreements can be settled.¹⁶

Bilateral relations in water control are based on the Agreement on Cooperation in the Use and Protection of Transboundary Rivers between the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Government of the People's Republic of China dated 12 September, 2001, realized by a Joint Commission on the Use and Protection of Transboundary Rivers. As a result, several documents have already been signed related to the problem that belongs to international legislation.¹⁷

On 4 July, 2005, China and Kazakhstan signed a joint Declaration on Strategic Partnership that envisaged, among other things, rational use and protection of water resources of transboundary rivers,¹⁸ thus making both countries responsible for further developments. Their bilateral relations were specified by the Cooperation Strategy between Kazakhstan and China in the 21st century signed in December 2006 and the Concept of the Development of Bilateral Economic Cooperation.

In October 2005, Shanghai hosted the third meeting of the Joint Commission on the Use and Protection of Transboundary Rivers that discussed the expansion of the contractual legal framework regarding transboundary rivers.

In January 2006, during the Astana visit of the Deputy Chairman of the PRC Zeng Qinghong the sides announced that they were ready to invigorate their cooperation on the basis of the decisions of the Joint Commission.¹⁹

In February 2006, Deputy Chairman of the Committee for Water Resources of the Ministry of Agriculture of Kazakhstan Amirkhan Kenshimov announced that China had agreed in principle to sign an agreement on water discharge of the Irtysh and Ili rivers. A workgroup was set up to discuss and identify the volumes of water discharge from China required for everyday and industrial needs and for ecological balance in both riverbeds.²⁰

In early April 2006, Foreign Minister of Kazakhstan Kasym-Zhomart Tokayev visited China and once again raised the transboundary river issue in his discussions with the Prime Minister of the State Council of the PRC Wen Jiabao. The Chinese official pointed out that the problem should be

¹⁶ See: V.I. Fokin, S.S. Shirin, J.V. Nikolaeva, N.M. Bogolubova, E.E. Elts, V.N. Baryshnikov, "Interaction of Cultures and Diplomacy of States," *Kasetsart Journal of Social Sciences*, No. 38 (1), 2017, pp. 45-49, available at [<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.kjss.2016.05.001>].

¹⁷ See: Agreement of 4 July, 2005 between the Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Ministry of Water Economy of the People's Republic of China on urgent information of the sides about natural calamities on the transboundary rivers (Astana). Enacted on 4 July, 2005, *Bulletin of International Agreements of the Republic of Kazakhstan*, Astana, No. 5, 2005, pp. 103-105; Agreement of 20 December, 2006 between the Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Ministry of Water Economy of the People's Republic of China on the development of scientific-research activities on the transboundary rivers (Beijing). Enacted on 20 December, 2006, *Bulletin of International Agreements of the Republic of Kazakhstan*, Astana, No. 1, 2007, pp. 95-97; Agreement of 20 December, 2006 between the Ministry of Environmental Protection of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Ministry of Water Economy of the People's Republic of China on mutual exchange of hydrological and hydrochemical information (data) obtained from the hydroposts on the main transboundary rivers (Beijing). Enacted on 20 December, 2006, *Bulletin of International Agreements of the Republic of Kazakhstan*, Astana, No. 1, 2007, pp. 98-99 (all in Russian).

¹⁸ See: Joint Declaration of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the People's Republic of China on establishing and development of strategic partnership, *Bulletin of International Agreements of the Republic of Kazakhstan*, Astana, No. 5, 2005, p. 111 (in Russian).

¹⁹ See: Joint Kazakhstan-Chinese Communique, Kazinform Information Agency, Astana, 2006, available in Russian at [<http://inform.kz/>].

²⁰ See: D. Pokidaev, "Vodorazdel," *Izvestia-Kazakhstan*, 13 February, 2006.

settled in the long-term interests of both countries, that it was highly important to preserve the ecological balance and rational use of water resources in the interests of the people of both states.²¹

On 20 December, 2006, the Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Ministry of Water Economy of the PRC signed an Agreement on the Development of Scientific and Research Cooperation on the Transboundary Rivers in Beijing; the Ministry of Environmental Protection of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Ministry of Water Economy of China signed an agreement on mutual exchange of hydrological and hydrochemical information (data) obtained from the border hypoposts on the main transboundary rivers (Beijing). The Cooperation Strategy between the People's Republic of China and the Republic of Kazakhstan for the 21st Century signed during the visit said, in particular: "Both sides speak highly of the achievements by the China-Kazakhstan joint committee for the utilization and protection of trans-border rivers. Both sides will, in the principle of equity and soundness, continue the cooperation under the existing mechanism and set down specific relevant measures so as to ensure the reasonable utilization and protection of trans-border rivers and biological resources and safeguard the tangible benefits of both sides in various fields."²²

The joint communique signed in August 2007 confirmed the earlier agreements and stressed that the sides' mutual interests should be ensured; it was decided to further cooperate on the construction of the Dostyk hydropower station on the Khorgos.²³ It should be said, however, that in 2007 XUAR unilaterally discharged the water of the Ulken-Lasty, thus depriving three economic regions of eastern Kazakhstan (Maykapchagay, Dosym and Umbetay) of water. The akimat of the Zaysan District tried unsuccessfully to talk to the administration of the Ili-Kazakh Autonomous District of XUAR that has violated the intergovernmental agreement of 2002 by its refusal to talk.²⁴

In early 2008, the talks on the joint use of transboundary water resources started moving in the right direction: the Kazakhstan delegation, headed by Vice Minister of Agriculture Dulat Aytjanov, finally reached an understanding with the Chinese partners on a draft agreement on water quality control and prevention of water pollution. The Chinese side received a text of the Concept on the Interstate Distribution of Water Resources of the Transboundary Rivers between the Republic of Kazakhstan and the People's Republic of China, elaborated by Astana. The Kazakhstan delegation insisted that the expert workgroups should gather for their next meeting in Xinjiang, rather than in the city of Dalian, as the Chinese side had suggested. The final protocol contained the points related to mutual inspections of water-use structures on transboundary rivers scheduled for July-August 2008 and the continued practice of exchange of inspections of hydrochemical laboratories and technological exchange.²⁵

In October 2008, after the Astana visit of the Prime Minister of the State Council of the PRC Wen Jiabao, the Joint Commission on the Use and Protection of Transboundary Rivers became part of the Sino-Kazakh Cooperation Committee. The joint communique said, in particular, that in the future the sides would continue the practice of joint settlement of the issues related to the use and protection of the transboundary rivers on the basis of the principles of high responsibility and mutual gain.²⁶

The new package of agreements can be described as a progress of sorts.

²¹ See: N. Gilt, "Otkrytaia dver v kitayskoy stene," *Izvestia-Kazakhstan*, 13 February, 2006.

²² "The Cooperation Strategy between the People's Republic of China and the Republic of Kazakhstan for the 21st Century," available at [<http://www.chinaembassy.org/nz/eng/xw/t285011.htm>]

²³ See: "Joint Communique of the People's Republic of China and Kazakhstan Republic," available in Russian at [<http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/rus/wjdt/gb/t353708.shtml>].

²⁴ See: D. Rakhmetov, *op. cit.*

²⁵ See: T. Baymukhambetov, *op. cit.*

²⁶ See: "Joint Communique of the People's Republic of China and the Republic of Kazakhstan, 31 October, 2008," available in Russian at [http://russian.china.org.cn/international/txt/2008-10/31/content_16697733.htm].

3.3. The Third Stage (late 2009-the present): Kazakhstan's Involvement in the Customs Union and EAEU as a Factor of New Geopolitics in the Region

The statements made by Hu Jintao during his visit to Kazakhstan on 12 December, 2009 ignited cautious optimism. Speaking about the transboundary river problem he said that “China will never infringe on the interests of Kazakhstan” and added that he hoped that “the discussions of bilateral use of the transboundary water resources within the framework of the bilateral commission would allow the sides to sign a corresponding document on these issues some time soon.”²⁷

In January 2010, the representative of the Foreign Ministry of China Ma Zhaoxu confirmed that his country attached special importance to strategic partnership in the development of and progress in the use of transboundary river water resources and stressed the importance of their rational use and protection.²⁸

A joint Sino-Kazakh project of an 11 km-long canal, which would also provide irrigation for more than 40,000 hectares of land on both sides of the border, can be described as the first result that took both sides' interests into account. “In 2003, the Kazakh authorities decided upon the reinforcement of the banks of the river level with the village of Khorgos to avoid regular flooding. In order to control the flow of the river, the construction of several dikes has been tabled, on the model of China which already has 25 km of dikes on its side of the river. A project to construct a Sino-Kazakh hydroelectric station called Dostyk (“Friendship”) was negotiated in 2005. This electricity station is to be made up of a cascade of small stations with a combined capacity of 21 MW and situated near the village of Baskunchi 20 km from Khorgos.”²⁹

In April 2013, speaking at the Boao Forum for Asia, Xi Jinping called on his Central Asian neighbors not to be afraid of changes and innovations. In September, while on a visit in Kazakhstan, the Chinese leader formulated a new idea—the Silk Road Economic Belt, which would revitalize cooperation between China and the Central Asian countries.

The visit brought over 20 contracts in the amount of about \$30 billion and the Joint Declaration on the Development of Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, the program of mid- and long-term trade and economic cooperation between the two countries up to the year 2020. The sides agreed to continue negotiations on the use of transboundary water.³⁰

The two countries are contemplating cooperation in the use of new energy sources, high technologies and hydropower in Kazakhstan economy; they signed an agreement on the Kerbulak Hydro-power Stations on the transboundary Ili River.

The results of Xi Jinping's Central Asian tour of September 2013 meant that China has resolved to increase its presence in Eurasia, read: greater involvement in the region's economy and integration.

The Chinese leader pointed out that “China and Kazakhstan should take opportunities and strengthen communication, trade, road connections, currency circulation between the two countries,

²⁷ L. Tusupbekova, “Kazakhstan i Kitay podelili transgranichnye reki. Itogi peregovorov Hu Jintao i N. Nazarbayeva v Astane,” *Kazakhstanskaia pravda*, 15 December, 2009.

²⁸ See: “MID KNR pridaet serioznoe znachenie ratsionalnomu ispolzovaniiu i okhrane vodnykh resursov kitaysko-kazakhstanskikh transgranichnykh rek,” China.org, available at [http://russian.china.org.cn/government/txt/2010-01/29/content_19328048.htm], 29 January, 2010.

²⁹ S. Peyrouse, “The Hydroelectric Sector in Central Asia and the Growing Role of China,” *China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly*, No. 5 (2), 2007, p. 138.

³⁰ See: “Kazakhstan i Kitay podpisali riad dvustoronnikh dokumentov,” available at [<http://dknews.kz/kazakhstan-i-kitajj-podpisali-ryad-dvustoronnikh-dokumentov.html>].

as well as mutual understanding of the two peoples, which would help spur other nations to join in the construction of the economic belt.”³¹

The concept of the Silk Road Economic Belt devised by the Chinese leader implies its possible coordination with the Eurasian Economic Union. If China persists in promoting the idea, it will have to revise its approaches to the problem of transboundary rivers on the borders with Kazakhstan and Russia.

4. Possible Solutions as Seen by the Sides

China, as the country in the upper reaches of transboundary rivers, is not involved in any of the multilateral international treaties on transboundary rivers; it is highly unlikely that it will rely on corresponding international experience. In fact, Beijing insists on individual approaches to each case; procrastination is another traditional instrument of Chinese diplomacy.

There is a more or less generally accepted opinion that Beijing is exploiting the current context as an instrument of pressure on Kazakhstan when addressing its own important strategic tasks.

An agreement between Kazakhstan and China on the rational use and protection of transboundary rivers presumes that the problem would be resolved between the two countries and that Russia, despite being one of the interested sides, would be excluded from the talks.

While haggling with China over the ways the water resources of the Irtysh were being used, Kazakhstan hoped that Russia would side with it, since the Irtysh crosses part of the Russian territory before it flows into the Ob. Moscow, however, has either pushed aside the problem as unimportant or is using it to keep Kazakhstan on a short leash.

It should be said that Beijing, Astana and Moscow would have gained a lot if the Siberian rivers were reversed to the arid regions of Central Asia and possibly to XUAR. We fully agree with this variant.

Having emerged in the early 20th century, this idea was actively discussed in the 1970s-1980s, the time when the Soviet leaders dreamed of huge projects and when man “waged an offensive against nature.” In his time, Yuri Luzhkov, a prominent Russian political and public figure, went even further: he suggested that a reservoir should be built in the Russian territory within the natural drainage divide between the Irtysh and Ob basins to gather water from the upper reaches of the Ob and other rivers.³² We are convinced that Kazakhstan and probably XUAR will thus get more water. In fact, the development of this autonomous region of China will add security and economic stability to the region. Stanislav Zhukov, for example, has written that Xinjiang is rapidly developing into one of the main centers of economic activities of Greater Central Asia that includes Xinjiang, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, neighboring parts of Russia and, to a certain extent, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.³³

The leaders of China are in principle prepared to discuss and gradually promote the projects of relevant agreements proposed by Kazakhstan. Very soon the Chinese side will introduce its amendments to the draft Concept on the Interstate Distribution of Water Resources of the Transboundary Rivers between the Republic of Kazakhstan and the People’s Republic of China.

³¹ “Chinese President Meets Speaker of Kazakh Parliament,” *People’s Daily Online*, available at [http://en.people.cn/90883/8426479.html].

³² See: D. Pisarenko, A. Uglanov, “Sredniuiu Aziu spasit Luzhkov?” *Argumenty i fakty*, No. 5, 2002, p. 20.

³³ See: S.V. Zhukov, O.B. Reznikova, *Tsentralnaia Azia i Kitay: ekonomicheskoe vzaimodeystvie v usloviakh globalizatsii*, IMEMO RAN, Moscow, 2009.

Geopolitical changes are highly important in this context. The Customs Union of Belarus, Kazakhstan and Russia set up in 2010 and the Eurasian Economic Union of the three countries (Armenia and Kyrgyzstan joined later) that started functioning on 1 January, 2015 will inevitably affect the nature of the Sino-Kazakh relationship. We cannot say so far that Beijing has finally abandoned its positions on water use and protection of transboundary rivers; it has demonstrated its readiness to take the interests of Kazakhstan and new geopolitics into account for the simple reason that it wants to preserve its economic interests in Kazakhstan. Indeed, economic and geopolitical security is more important than the issue of transboundary rivers. Beijing, however, is ready to move towards a common approach to it.

Conclusions

It is abundantly clear that the use of water of the Ili and the Irtysh is a fairly complicated problem created by the actions of the People's Republic of China and the Republic of Kazakhstan. The agreements that have already been concluded allow us to address practically the entire set of problems related to quality control, water intake and the ecology of transboundary rivers, yet it is not that easy to implement them: so far the sides have not arrived at a common ground on the issue of securitization of the water problem; bilateral negotiations have not yielded any consequential results; the Kazakh side is displeased with the earlier agreements that did not take its interests into account; there is no agreement on the amount of water withdrawal on the part of China, while the ideas about water management are too different to be harmonized.

The way the water of the Khorgos was divided cannot be fully applied to other transboundary rivers: the drainage divide of the transboundary Khorgos River differs a lot from the drainage divide of the Ili and the Irtysh.

Despite the very complicated problem of the use of transboundary river water resources by the two states, the new geopolitical reality in the post-Soviet territory forces Beijing to choose one of the two options: either the status quo related to the Ili and the Irtysh rivers and the permanently aggravating problem, or taking the interests of Kazakhstan into account for the sake of China's continued economic influence in Kazakhstan and Central Asia.

UKRAINE AND KAZAKHSTAN: TOGETHER IN THE GREAT SILK ROAD PROJECT

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ABSTRACT

The authors discuss the role the Silk Road transportation corridor will play in the East-West relationship, outline the prospects and specify the problems that arise in the course of cooperation between Ukraine and Kazakhstan within the project.

KEYWORDS: *Kazakhstan, Ukraine, Silk Road, TRACECA, cooperation in transportation.*

Introduction

Today, it has become especially important to find new ways and means to shake up cooperation between Ukraine and Kazakhstan in the transportation sphere, with regard to the geopolitical and geo-economic processes unfolding in the world. Both have a good chance of improving their indices of economic cooperation and identifying the priorities of bilateral cooperation, the One Belt, One Road project that China initiated in 2013 being one of them.

The relations between Ukraine and Kazakhstan have not yet attracted the attention of the Ukrainian and Kazakhstan academic communities, yet Iu. Tavrovskiy¹ and V. Povoroznik² have written

¹ See: Iu. V. Tavrovskiy, *Novy Shelkovy put*, Eksmo, Moscow, 2017.

² See: V. Povoroznik, V. Perebiynis, "Proekt 'Odin poias—odin shliakh': mozhlivosti dlia Ukraini," Mizhnarodniy tsentr perspektivnikh doslidzhen (MTsPD) za pidtrimki Tsentru suchasnogo Kitaiu "TIANSIA LINK", 2015 (V. Povoroznik,

about the subject, while A. Nurseitov,³ A. Amrebaev,⁴ R. Zhangozha⁵ and S. Rudenko⁶ have several scholarly articles on the subject to their names.

We have posed ourselves with the task of analyzing the implementation specifics of the One Belt, One Road project and assessing the future of cooperation of Kazakhstan and Ukraine within it.

Revival of the Great Silk Road as an Economic and Political Project in Contemporary Realities

The year 1992 can be described as a starting point in the diplomatic relationship between Ukraine and Kazakhstan. Disintegration of the Soviet Union inspired them to seek, develop and upgrade cooperation in different spheres, the transportation sphere and possible cooperation within the Great Silk Road project being one of the central points.

The Great Silk Road was a unique system of trade caravan roads (up to 12,000 km long) that had taken shape in the 2nd century B.C. and remained functional until the 16th century A.D. as a link that joined the vast space stretching from China to the Mediterranean. It was along the Great Silk Road that peoples exchanged technologies, ideas and handicrafts and learned more about their neighbors' cultures; trade as its main function being an important development factor of the great civilizations of China, India, Egypt, the Arab world, Rome and Byzantium that served as the foundation of the contemporary world. In China it was known as the Jade Road: its eastern part was used to export jade, which was commonly believed to bring luck, hence its value, which was practically equal to that of gold and silver.

The Great Silk Road, which played the main role in developing the relationships between China and European countries, was the symbol of East-West relationships. The term itself was coined in 1877 by Baron von Richthofen, a prominent German geographer and geologist, to describe the routes between the Far East and Western Europe.

Ukraine and Kazakhstan were the two main components of the Great Silk Road. President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev has written in his book *V serdtse Evrazii* (In the Heart of Eurasia): "According to numerous historical chronicles, the Great Silk Road that connected the West and the East of Eurasia in the middle of the first millennium A.D. ran across the steppes of Central Kazakhstan. As one of the most important phenomena in human history, it took shape amid the developing and consolidating trade contacts between the states of Europe and Asia. It was along its routes that a unique and highly distinctive steppe civilization finally took shape, a fantastic combination of nomadic and settled lifestyles."⁷

V. Perebinyos, "One Belt, One Road: Ukraine's Opportunities," International Center for Advanced Studies under the Center for Contemporary China Tianxia Link, 2015).

³ See: A. Nurseitov, "Ekonomichesky poias Shelkovogo puti: vozmozhnosti i perspektivy," available at [<https://yvision.kz/post/520219>].

⁴ See: A. Amrebaev, "Ekonomicheskiy poias Velikogo Shelkovogo puti: ot idei k realnosti," *Kazakhstan v globalnykh protsessakh*, No. 3, 2014, pp. 30-39.

⁵ See: R. Zhangozha, "Proekt 'Noviy shovkoviy shliakh' iak chinnik diversifikatsii transnatsionalnykh torgovelo-ekonomichnikh stosunkiv," *Ukraina: podii, fakti, komentari*, No. 10, 2017, pp. 38-42 (R. Dzhanguzhin, "The Project New Silk Road as the Diversification Factor of the Trade and Economic Relations," *Ukraine: Events, Facts, and Comments*, No. 10, 2017, pp. 38-42).

⁶ See: S.V. Rudenko, O.V. Akimova, "Obosnovanie skhemy perevozki tovarov mezhdu Evropoy i Kitayem cherez porty Ukrainy," available at [<https://www.sworld.com.ua/konfer-vuz3/2.pdf>].

⁷ N.A. Nazarbayev, *V serdtse Evrazii*, Atamura, Almaty, 2005, p. 77.

On 16 September, 2013, during a visit to China, Chairman Xi Jinping formulated the Belt and Road initiative, a strategy of intensified international trade intended to encourage economic cooperation between the countries along the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road, free movement of raw materials, capitals and workforce, more efficient distribution of resources and more efficient regional economic cooperation. A vast free trade area that will finally appear, stretching from the northwestern provinces of China to Central and Eastern Europe and having the population of about three billion, will become a huge potential market.

“The Belt and Road Initiative aims to ... establish and strengthen partnerships among the countries along the Belt and Road, set up all-dimensional, multi-tiered and composite connectivity networks, and realize diversified, independent, balanced and sustainable development in these countries.”⁸

The list of cooperation priorities include:

- (1) enhancing policy coordination ... should promote intergovernmental cooperation, build a multi-level intergovernmental macro-policy exchange and communication mechanisms, expand shared interests, enhance mutual political trust, and reach a new cooperation consensus;
- (2) giving priority to linking up unconnected road sections, improving road network connectivity;
- (3) removing investment and trade barriers for the creation of a sound business environment; establishing free trade areas so as to unleash the potential for expanded cooperation;
- (4) increasing financial integration and money flows and transfer to national currencies;
- (5) carrying forward the spirit of friendly cooperation of the Silk Road by promoting extensive cultural and academic exchange, tourism, and media cooperation.⁹

In late March 2015, the National Development and Reform Commission, Foreign Ministry and Ministry of Commerce of China adopted the Vision and Actions on Jointly Building Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road, which specified that the project intended to connect Asia, Europe and Africa via five routes. The Silk Road Economic Belt will bring closer together

- (1) China and Europe via Central Asia and Russia;
- (2) China and the Middle East via Central Asia;
- (3) China and Southeast Asia, South Asia and the Indian Ocean. The 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road will rely on the existing sea ports of China to connect;
- (4) China with Europe via the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean;
- (5) China with the southern part of the Pacific across the South China Sea.¹⁰

Having concentrated on these five routes based on the already functioning transportation infrastructure and hoping to invigorate cooperation, China intends to build up six economic corridors (see Fig. 1).

- (1) The New Eurasia land bridge—an international railway that begins in Lianyungang (the Jiangsu Province of China), via Alashankou to the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region to Rotterdam in the Netherlands.

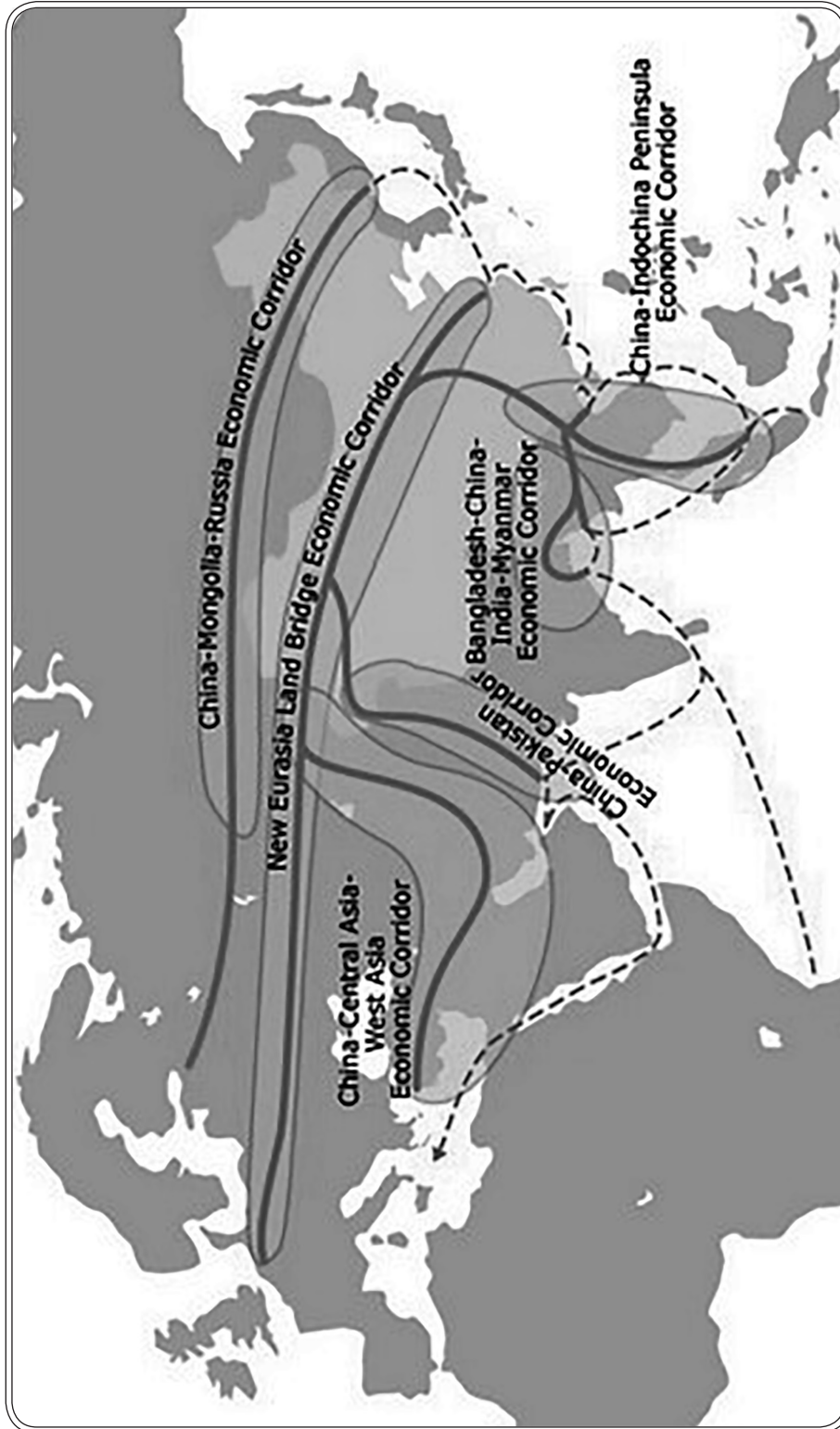
⁸ “Vision and Actions on Jointly Building Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st Century Maritime Silk Road,” National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC), People’s Republic of China, available at [http://en.ndrc.gov.cn/newsrelease/201503/t20150330_669367.html].

⁹ See: *Ibidem*.

¹⁰ See: *Ibidem*.

Figure 1

The Belt and Road Initiative:
Six Economic Corridors Spanning Asia, Europe and Africa



- (2) The China-Mongolia-Russia economic corridor; the countries have been cooperating for a long time now. In 2014, at the SCO summit in Dushanbe the leaders of these countries identified the main principles and key trends of trilateral cooperation and agreed to jointly promote the Economic Belt of the Silk Road project, reconstruct the Eurasia-Russia land bridge and discussed the Mongolian Steppe Road program.¹¹
- (3) The China-Central Asia-West Asia economic corridor runs from Xinjiang to Central and West Asia, where it will join the local railway network to reach the Mediterranean and the Arabian Peninsula. It includes five Central Asian countries (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan) and Iran and Turkey in West Asia. China has already signed bilateral agreements on the Silk Road Economic Belt with Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan to promote mutually advantageous cooperation in trade, investments, transport and communication.
- (4) The China-Indochina economic corridor. In December 2014, speaking at the fifth meeting of the leaders of the sub-regional Greater Mekong economic cooperation project, which took place in Bangkok, the Chinese Prime Minister formulated three ideas designed to deepen the relationships between China and five Indochina countries:
 - (1) joint planning and construction of a vast transportation network and several industrial projects;
 - (2) new regime of cooperation to collect the necessary financial means;
 - (3) encouragement of sustainable and coordinated social and economic development.

Today, the countries along the Mekong River are building nine inter-national highways to connect the east with the west and the north with the south. Some of the projects have been completed. The highway that leads to the port of Dongxing (the Guangxi Province) on the Chinese-Vietnamese border has been already completed.

- (5) The idea of the China-Pakistan economic corridor was first formulated in 2013 by the Prime Minister of China during his visit to Pakistan. This corridor was expected to stretch from the Kashgar (Kashi) city in China's northwest to the port of Gwadar in the south of Pakistan. Today, the governments have agreed on a preliminary long-term plan for the construction of highways, railways, oil- and gas pipelines and fiber-optic networks.
- (6) The Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar economic corridor will cover the territory of 1.65 million sq. km with a population of about 440 million by highways, railways, maritime and air connecting routes. This will make it easier to move commodities and workforce across borders and practically liquidate trade barriers on land; to reach the market and to increase the volume of multilateral trade.

According to the Institute for Strategic, Political, Security and Economic Consultancy (ISPSW), potentially, all countries involved in the New Silk Road project will account for 55% of world GDP; 70% of the world's total population and 75% of all energy sources.¹² When implemented, the Silk Road project may cause revolutionary changes along its route.

The Great Silk Road project is not only about transportation and transit routes; it is a comprehensive plan of economic and infrastructural development for many states. Industry, trade and the

¹¹ See: J. Nikolaeva, N. Bogoliubova, V. Fokin, V. Baryshnikov, P. Klevtsov, E. Eltc, "Cultural Mega-Events as an International, Cultural, and Political Tool," *Codrul Cosminului*, No. 23 (2), 2017, pp. 293-306.

¹² See: "The New Silk Road—Idea and Concept," Institut für Strategie-, Politik-, Sicherheits- und Wirtschaftsberatung (ISPSW), available at [<http://tarjomefa.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/4973-English.pdf>].

service sphere will create a sustainable and secure environment for the western regions of China and central regions of Eurasia, helping them reveal their potentials.

This initiative is based on the country's logistic security; the Chinese, however, are not concerned with transportation corridors as much as with consolidating their influence in the countries of Chinese transit. It is a geopolitical and geo-economic plan of building up a multipolar world on the platform of open cooperation. China's economic advantages and its readiness to invest in economic projects along the entire stretch of the route are very important. Trade between China and the region's countries will bring Chinese products to South Asia, the Middle East and Europe.

The investments into the One Belt, One Road project are estimated at trillions of dollars. According to the Asian Development Bank, the infrastructure in the APR will require about \$750 billion annually. China plans to build 72 new airports, 43 thousand km of expressways and 22 thousand km of railways before 2020.¹³

The project of this scope required a bank; the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and the Silk Road Fund were set up on China's initiative. Fifty-seven countries (France, Finland, Poland, Spain, Germany and the U.K. among them) joined the new financial organization with an authorized capital of \$100 billion and an initial capital of \$50 billion. The U.S. and Japan refused to join the new project, while critics suspect that AIIB intends to replace the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank. The European countries remain convinced that the new bank will become an important addition to the already functioning institutions, ensuring the funding of infrastructural projects in Asia. The Silk Road Fund is based on Chinese money: the foreign currency reserves, the money of the Chinese Investment Corporation, the Export-Import Bank of China and the China Development Bank, which will invest in the Silk Road Economic Belt project. China plans to invest \$40 billion; it is ready to help train 20 thousand specialists in the next five years to work on the project and its strategy.

Ukraine and Kazakhstan in the Great Silk Road Project

The Great Silk Road project is seen as a chance to improve internal communication between the Eurasian countries, which will help save time required to complete any project and the money spent on workforce; simplify the movement of people; stimulate trade between China and Central and Eastern Europe.

Ukraine's involvement in the Agreement on Association and bilateral platforms along with the countries of Central and Eastern Europe and the EU has created all the required political and economic conditions of its involvement in the Great Silk Road project as a participant in its own right.

When realized, the project will supply Ukraine and Kazakhstan with considerable economic advantages created, in the first place, by the transportation corridors and movement of goods to Europe, which will undoubtedly consolidate their international positions. Due to their geo-economic advantages, developed transportation infrastructure (the railway network, ice-free ports and a system of highways) and active trade and economic relations with their neighbors and China, Ukraine and Kazakhstan have a good chance of becoming the main link that connects China, which is actively developing its trade contacts, with Eastern and even Western Europe.

The Chinese project does not contradict Ukraine's desire to increase its economic cooperation and integration with the European Union or Kazakhstan's involvement in the Eurasian Economic

¹³ See: Y. Chen, S. Matzinger, J. Woetzel, "Chinese Infrastructure: The Big Picture," McKinsey & Company, available at [<https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/winning-in-emerging-markets/chinese-infrastructure-the-big-picture>].

Union. This project will stimulate economic growth and help remove many barriers, including political ones.

According to the experts, the Europe-Asia transportation corridor—the integral Eurasian system (Western Europe-Belarus-Russia-Kazakhstan-China)—seems preferable: it is shorter, cheaper and safer. Indeed, it traverses only three countries—Belarus, Russia and Kazakhstan that have done a lot to unify their customs procedures and tariffs.

The highly flexible nature of the Great Silk Road project and China's desire to diversify the routes has offered Ukraine a chance to be involved in it and cooperate with China. This issue is invariably present on the agenda of discussions between country leaders. In October 2015, in particular, the leaders of both countries paid a lot of attention to the problems of transportation infrastructure required to move cargo from Asia to Europe via Kazakhstan and Ukraine within the Great Silk Road project. The economic sanctions that the EU imposed on Russia because of its conflict with Ukraine and Russia's symmetrical answer made the problem of alternative routes doubly important. Russia banned the transportation of goods across its territory to third countries, thus forcing the Central Asian countries to minimize their trade with Ukraine, which negatively affected EU members' interests. Under these circumstances, Kazakhstan had no choice but increase its involvement in the Trans-Caspian Route of the Silk Road: 40% of its foreign trade involves EU countries.

The Trans-Caspian corridor is an alternative to the traditional route from China to Europe that runs across Kazakhstan, Russia and Belarus and is, in fact, a logistical chain that bypasses Russia. Cooperation between Ukraine and Kazakhstan within the TRACECA project set up by the EU to encourage trade and economic contacts between European countries across the Black Sea, the Caucasus and the Caspian, in order to reach the Central Asian countries was treated as a mandatory premise. For many years, this project and its realization remained the key issue of cooperation between Ukraine and Kazakhstan: they constructed, reconstructed, and used Caspian ports together; Central Asian companies were invited to take part in modifying Ukrainian ports to cope with export-import cargo and constructing and reconstructing highways and railways.

A new transportation network, modernization of the old infrastructure, and new trade and economic hubs along the New Silk Road, which stretches from China to the APR and Europe, can be described as the project's great benefit. The planned clusters of interconnected trans-Eurasian corridors will ensure its efficiency, security and high competitiveness.¹⁴ The sides involved will be able to avoid the bans imposed by Russia on their freight traffic. Russia's embargo undermined Europe's chances to use the recently created trans-Eurasian railway network: the products that could have been moved from producers to consumers by land transportation routes are banned in Russia and cannot be moved across its territory. Europe is attempting to fully tap the trans-Caspian part of the Baku-Aktau route: on the way back it fills its containers with Chinese goods to avoid the trade blockade; today this part of the route is used more actively than before.

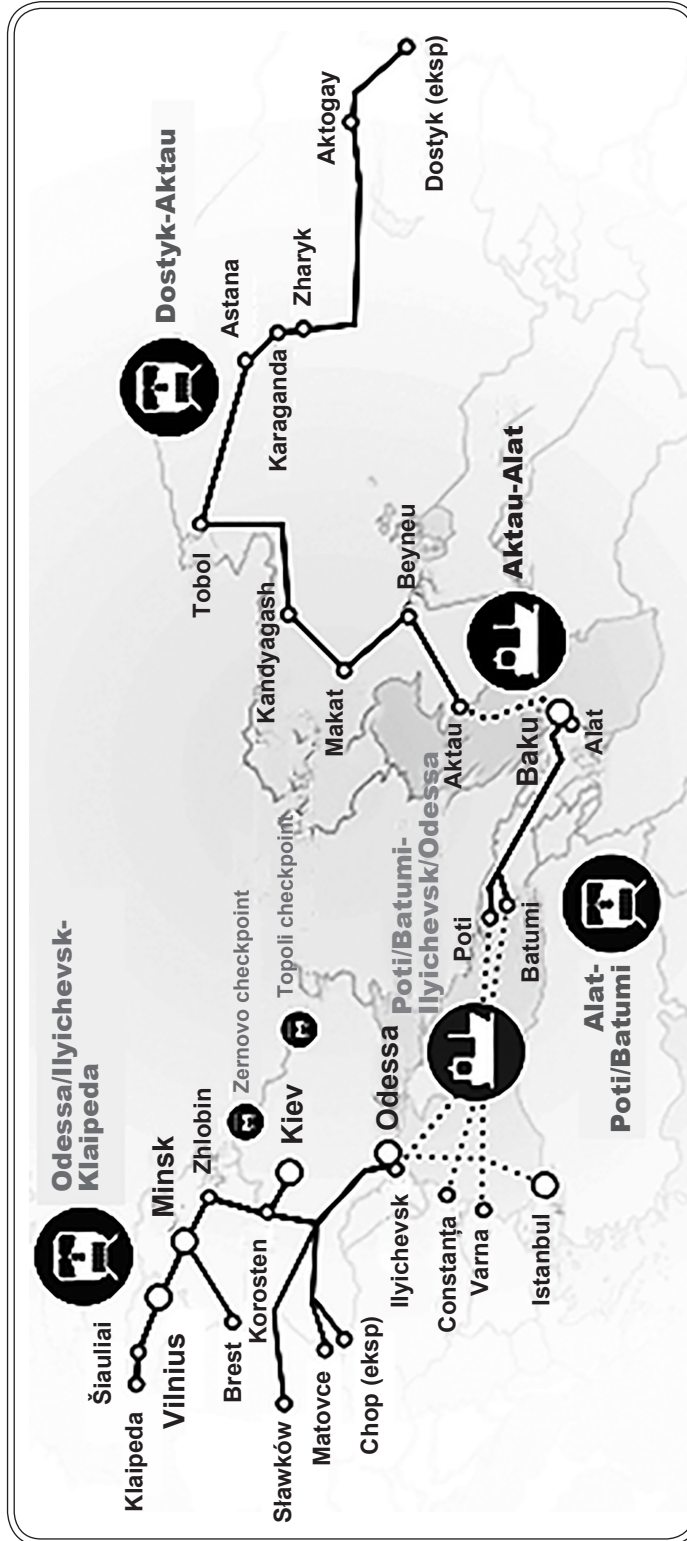
China, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Ukraine had set up a new transportation consortium, which Turkey joined in late 2014. That created a new container train route across Ukraine, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and China (across the Black Sea and the Caspian), the so-called New Silk Road. The protocol on competitive preferential tariffs on freight transportation had been signed on 15 January, 2016 allowed the first container train to start from Ilyichevsk. This made it possible to ship cargo bypassing the territory of the Russian Federation. On 31 January, the train, having covered 5.5 thousand km, arrived at the Dostyk station at the Chinese border. It took the train 15.5 days (instead of expected 11-12 days) to reach the point of destination because of bad weather in the Black Sea. The new multi-modal corridor takes five times less time than the sea routes.¹⁵ The first

¹⁴ See: R. Zhangozha, *op. cit.*

¹⁵ See: A. Muravskiy, "Khod konteynernym poezdom", *Porty Ukrainy*, No. 8 (50), 2015, pp. 20-22.

Figure 2

The Route of Transit Cargo Transportation in the China-EU-China through Ukrainian Ports



train has allowed to pinpoint the shortcomings of the new route: it is much more expensive than the movement along the existing route across Russia and Belarus: \$4,110 against \$7,927 along the newly created route. The sides are actively discussing the problem. Kazakhstan lowered its tariff rates for cargo movement by container trains from Dostyk to Aktau by 42%; Ukraine lowered its rates for moving cargoes between Ilyichevsk to the EU countries by 60%.¹⁶

The railway gauge of Ukraine and Kazakhstan differs from the gauge used in China (the European or world standard, to be more exact, is 1,435 mm wide); Kazakhstan and Ukraine use the Soviet gauge, which is 1,520 mm wide, which means that cargoes are moved from one train to another (or the wheelsets are changed) twice, which requires time and money.

There are no fairly big railway stations along the Kazakhstan stretch to be used to add more cargo to the train. To achieve efficiency, the cars should be completely loaded along the route, which requires several transport and logistics hubs.

The sides should promote the Trans-Caspian route to attract exporters primarily by optimizing the tariff policy.

Under the memorandum signed between Ukraine and Lithuania on the unification of the New Silk Road and the Viking container train as part of cooperation with the European Union and implementation of the free trade area, EU member countries will use the route together with Ukraine, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and China (see Fig. 2).

According to preliminary calculations, freight transit along the Silk Road Economic Belt across Kazakhstan to Ukrainian ports and further on to EU countries is more attractive for the industrial centers of Western China than freight transit along the Maritime Silk Road as far as delivery time (17.8 days against 63.7 days) and the cost of moving one forty-foot container (\$7,710/FEU against \$7,750/FEU) are concerned.¹⁷

Today, according to Chairman Xi Jinping the project has already attracted about 80 countries and organizations. The Chinese side has pointed out that the Belt and Road Initiative is designed to consolidate intergovernmental cooperation, create favorable trade conditions, remove the investment and trade barriers, deepen the interaction in the sphere of transportation to arrive at an infrastructural network that will connect Asia, Europe and Africa and will improve multilateral cooperation through cultural and scholarly exchanges.¹⁸

Conclusion

Bilateral relations between Kazakhstan and Ukraine will be based, primarily, on their shared economic interests. Political support will be extended if both countries arrive at real and sustainable trade and economic contacts. Their involvement in the New Silk Road project will help realize their cooperation potential in modernization of the transportation infrastructure, agriculture, machine building and aircraft industry, in the military industrial complex and the energy sector.

¹⁶ See: V. Povoroznik, V. Perebiynis, op. cit.

¹⁷ See: S.V. Rudenko, O.V. Akimova, op. cit.

¹⁸ See: "Bolee 80 stran i organizatsiy stali uchastnikami 'Odnogo poiasa—odnogo puti'," *Delovoy Kazakhstan*, available at [<https://dknews.kz/silk-road/69309-bolee-80-stran-i-organizatsij-stali-uchastnikami-odnogo-poyasa-odnogo-puti.html>].

SOUTH KOREA AND KAZAKHSTAN: PARTICULARITIES OF CULTURAL AND HUMANITARIAN COOPERATION

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ABSTRACT

The Republic of Kazakhstan and the Republic of Korea are strategic partners who are currently deepening their partnership. Close cultural and humanitarian cooperation creates an additional foundation for long-term cooperation and expanding political and economic connections. The relationship between the two countries is developing on the basis of the Declaration of General Principles for Relations and Cooperation between the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Republic of Korea,

and the cultural and humanitarian interactions are regulated by the special Agreement on the Cultural, Scientific and Technological Cooperation. Both documents were signed during the official visit of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev to the Republic of Korea (15-18 May, 1995). The paper discusses the main elements and peculiarities of the cultural and humanitarian exchange between the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Republic of Korea.

KEYWORDS: *Kazakhstan, Central Asia, South Korea, public opinion, humanitarian cooperation, cultural and humanitarian interaction, youth.*

Introduction

On 28 January, 1992, diplomatic relations were established between Kazakhstan and the Republic of Korea, and close ties have formed between the two countries in the 25 years that elapsed since. Economic cooperation deserves a special mention, with over 900 joint enterprises founded in Kazakhstan with participation of South Korean capital, of which, according to the Ministry of Investment and Development of the Republic of Kazakhstan, about 430 are actively operating. The following companies are among the major partners of Kazakh enterprises: Samsung C&T, LG Electronics, LG Chem, SK Corporation, Hyundai, POSCO, etc.; Dong Il Highville, Urim, and other construction firms.¹ Cooperation in the political sphere is also maintained. For instance, in April 2018, in Astana the head of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea Kang Kyung-wha reported that South Korea is hoping for further support and assistance of Kazakhstan as the member of the U.N. Security Council in the reduction of the nuclear arsenal on the Korean Peninsula.²

Cultural and humanitarian ties are an important sphere of the two countries' cooperation. In the years of independence of the Republic of Kazakhstan about 30 joint cultural events have been conducted. The first session of the Kazakhstan-South Korea Commission on Cultural Cooperation was held on 22 December, 2010 in Seoul. The second session was held on 22 November, 2013 in Astana.³

The paper reviews the basic components of the cultural and humanitarian cooperation between the two countries.

Korean Diaspora in Kazakhstan

In the initial phase, the Korean diaspora in Kazakhstan had played the role of a link, becoming the main actor in bilateral relations. It still plays a significant role in the relations between the two countries. The majority of the *koryo saram* are the descendants of Koreans deported from the Russian Far East in 1937, during the period of political repressions. According to the most recent statistical data, there are 108,117 Koreans in Kazakhstan. The topic of ethnic Koreans in Kazakhstan and their role in establishing contacts between the two countries is noted regularly in the course of bilateral summits and intergovernmental meetings.

Since the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries, Koreans in Kazakhstan have been actively participating in the development of bilateral ties and cooperation in the economic sphere, as well in the domains of culture, education and science. The elite of the Korean diaspora in Kazakhstan maintains tight connections with representatives of South Korean business, which allowed to create a number of large joint enterprises in Kazakhstan. A positive attitude of the Kazakh population towards local Koreans, who are considered hard-working, responsible and law-abiding citizens, was transferred onto Koreans arriving from South Korea.

¹ See: "FACT SHEET on Cooperation between the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Republic of Korea (15 August)," available at [<http://dep-econom.mid.gov.kz/en/pages/fact-sheet-cooperation-between-republic-kazakhstan-and-republic-korea-august>], 18 June, 2018.

² See: "Glavy MID Kazakhstana i Iuzhnoi Korei obsudili problemy Koreiskogo poluostrova," available at [<https://mir24.tv/news/16301159/glavy-mid-kazahstana-i-yuzhnoi-korei-obsudili-problemy-koreiskogo-poluostrova>], 14 June, 2018.

³ See: "Kazakhstan i Iuzhnaia Koreia," available at [https://www.inform.kz/ru/kazakhstan-i-yuzhnaya-koreya_a2971960], 14 June, 2018.

Table 1

Number of Koreans according to the Census (*people*)

	1939	1959	1970	1979	1989	1999	2009	2018
Koreans	96,453	74,019	78,078	91,984	103,315	99,665	100,385	108,177

Sources: (1) Demoscope Weekly [http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/ssp/sng_nac_39.php?reg=10], 14 June, 2018.
(2) Demoscope Weekly [http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/ssp/sng_nac_59.php?reg=91], 14 June, 2018.
(3) Demoscope Weekly [http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/ssp/sng_nac_70.php?reg=5], 14 June, 2018.
(4) Demoscope Weekly [http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/ssp/sng_nac_79.php?reg=5], 14 June, 2018.
(5) Demoscope Weekly [http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/ssp/sng_nac_89.php?reg=5], 14 June, 2018.
(6) Various ethnicities in the population of the Republic of Kazakhstan as of the beginning of 2018 [https://data.egov.kz/api/v2/kazakhstan_respublikasy_halkyny/v2?pretty], 14 June, 2018.

The Association of Koreans in Kazakhstan (AKK) invests efforts in the cultural dialog between North and South Korea. For instance, in 2007 AKK organized the International Festival of Korean Art, and artists from both South and North Korea performed on stage of the Korean Theater.

2018 marks the 80th anniversary of Koreans' residence in Kazakhstan, and the Association of Koreans in Kazakhstan intends to conduct 20 international and domestic projects.⁴

The Attitude of Kazakhstan's Population towards South Korea: Public Opinion

In 2008 and 2016, the Public Opinion Institute⁵ has held a panel sociological survey *The Image of South Korea in Kazakhstan: People's Opinion*. One thousand and two hundred respondents were polled in 14 regions of the country and in the cities of Astana and Almaty, 55.7% of them female, and 44.3% male. The age distribution of the respondents was as follows: most of the respondents belong to the 30-45 age group (33.7%), the second group in size was 18-29 (28%), smaller groups were those representing people 46-60 (27.4%) and 61 and over (10.9%).

Generally, 80.2% of respondents believe that a positive image of South Korea has formed in Kazakhstan.

⁴ See: "Pod odnim shanyrakom. Iz interv'iu vitse-prezidenta Assotsiatsii koreitsev Kazakhstana Sergeia Ogaia," available at [<http://and.kz/site/article/3128>].

⁵ See: "Imidzh Iuzhnoi Korei v Kazakhstane: mnenie naseleniia," Public Opinion Research Institute, 2017.

Table 2

**Image of South Korea
as Seen by the People of Kazakhstan**

<i>Possible Responses</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Share, %</i>
Mostly positive	404	33.7
Positive	558	46.5
Negative	44	3.7
Mostly negative	13	1.1
Undecided / No answer	181	15.0
Total	1,200	100.0

Respondents were subsequently offered to select the “national products” that they primarily associated with South Korea. The associations of the Kazakhstan residents included household appliances and electronics (52.7%), automobiles (36.8%) and medicine (28.3%).

In the 18-29 age group, the third position was filled by TV series (31.3%), a fact that can probably be explained by the great interest of youth in the film industry. Korean TV series are most popular among women in the 18-45 age group (61.1%). The country’s TV series are among the top five associations that the residents of Kazakhstan have with South Korea (27.3%).

As it is apparent from the data in Table 4, South Korea is primarily of interest to the population of Kazakhstan because of its unique nature and geographic location (19.7%), film industry, theaters, artists (14.3%), historical sites and landmarks (13.8%). Meanwhile, 10.8% of respondents had difficulty in responding to this question due to lack of familiarity with the country.

Table 3

**Major Associations that the People of
Kazakhstan have with South Korea**

<i>Possible Responses</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Share, %*</i>
Household appliances and electronics	632	52.7
Automobiles	442	36.8
Medicine	339	28.3
TV series	328	27.3
National cuisine	198	16.5
Clothing	141	11.8

Table 3 (continued)

Possible Responses	Number	Share, %*
Local Koreans	75	6.3
K-pop**	30	2,5
Undecided / No answer	17	1,4

* The sum is not equal to 100% because the respondents could select several responses.
 ** A specific genre of South Korean rock music popular all over the world.

Table 4

**Most Interesting Sides of
South Korea for the People of Kazakhstan**

Possible Responses	Number	Share, %
Unique nature of this country, its geographic location and distinctive features	236	19.7
Film industry, theater, artists, directors	171	14.3
Historic sites, architecture, monuments and other landmarks	165	13.8
National cuisine	120	10.0
“Korean economic miracle”	60	5.0
The country’s sports achievements, athletes and sporting events	53	4.4
Natural Korean cosmetics	49	4.1
Folk culture (songs, dances, rituals, clothing)	46	3.8
Korean fashion	34	2.8
Citizens of South Korea (Koreans)	23	1.9
Music, composers, performers	17	1.4
I have no interest in this country	96	8.0
I don’t know much about this country, can’t answer	130	10.8
<i>Total</i>	<i>1,200</i>	<i>100.0</i>

Meanwhile, 744 respondents (62%) have answered affirmatively when asked whether they would like to visit South Korea, and 456 (38%) did not express such a desire.

Korea's image in Kazakhstan is comprised of the following elements:

1. Products "Made in Korea" are extremely popular in Kazakhstan (electronics, automobiles, cosmetics, etc.).
2. Korean TV series, performers and pop music are very popular. Under the influence of K-pop, a new music style, namely, Q-pop, emerged in Kazakhstan. Its founders are the members of Ninety-One band (Kazakh boys-band).
3. State visits, such as the visit of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan in November 2016, are raising a wave of interest towards Korea.
4. A major contribution to the development of cultural relations is made by the Embassy of South Korea in Kazakhstan and the Korean Cultural Center.
5. Medical tourism to Korea is growing more attractive for Kazakh citizens.
6. Cultural affinity, similarity of languages (Altaic languages), traditions and rituals, general Asian kinship.
7. Korean cuisine is very popular in Kazakhstan, the number of Korean stores, restaurants, coffee houses is growing notably.

Certain aspects of Korea's image in Kazakhstan can be discussed through the prism of the results of a sociological survey of young people.⁶ The share of youth in Central Asian countries is currently rather high. For instance, 25% of Kazakhstan's population is comprised of people between 14 and 29 years of age.

In order to survey the opinions among youth, a comparative sociological study was conducted in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. The surveys were conducted according to a single method, with a 1,000 respondents between 14 and 29 years of age in each country. The project was developed and realized by the Public Opinion Research Institute (Astana, Kazakhstan⁷), on commission from the Central Asian regional office of Friedrich Ebert Foundation⁸ and was based on the methodology of the German research project Shell Youth Study, conducted in Germany since 1953. Professor K. Hurrelmann, one of the founders of Shell Youth Study, was the research consultant on the project.

Table 5 presents the respondents' answers regarding the establishment of relations between South Korea and the countries participating in the project. It is apparent that young people from all four countries regard the relations as positive and believe that closer ties should be the goal. Kazakhstan's youth (52.4%) believes that the relations should remain "in their current state."

⁶ See: B.I. Rakisheva, *Molodezh Tsentralnoi Azii. Sravnitelny obzor (na osnove sotsiologicheskogo oprosa)*, Scientific editors Klaus Hurrelmann and Peer Teschendorf (Berlin, Germany), Almaty, 2017, 90 pp., available at [<http://www.fes-centralasia.org/ru/statja/ffeh-predstavljaet-sravnitelnyj-analiz-issledovanij-serii-molodezh-centralnoj-azii.html>].

⁷ Public Opinion Research Institute was established in 2013 by a group of sociologists with over 19 years professional experience. The institute specializes in studying public opinion, and conducts marketing and sociological surveys (see the Institute's website address: [<http://www.opinions.kz/>]).

⁸ Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (Friedrich Ebert Foundation) was set up in 1925 under the political will of the first democratically elected President of Germany Friedrich Ebert. The Friedrich Ebert Foundation in Central Asia began its work in 1993, its office in Kazakhstan (Almaty) was opened this same year, a year later it was opened in Kyrgyzstan (Bishkek), in 1997 in Uzbekistan (Tashkent), in 2004 in Tajikistan (see the Foundation's website address: [<http://www.fes-centralasia.org/ru/>]).

Table 5

**Opinions of Youth from Central Asian Countries
on the Preferable Relations of their Country with South Korea (%)**

<i>Answers Selected by Respondents from:</i>	<i>More Close Relations</i>	<i>More Distant Relations</i>	<i>Relations Should Remain in Current State</i>	<i>Undecided / No Answer</i>	<i>Refuse to Answer</i>
Kazakhstan	20.8	19.6	52.4	1.3	5.9
Kyrgyzstan	27.1	19.8	43.3	4.1	5.7
Uzbekistan	51.6	3.9	34.0	0.8	9.7
Tajikistan	31.8	13.6	41.5	4.1	9.0

Young people of four Central Asian countries were asked questions regarding the possibility of continuing their education in various countries, and it has become apparent that the share of respondents from Kazakhstan is the lowest among those who would like to study in South Korea. The language barrier is a possible reason (education in South Korea is primarily conducted in Korean), along with a low level of awareness of South Korean higher educational institutions among prospective students.

Table 6

**Attractiveness of Various Countries
for Continuing Education among the Youth of
Central Asian Countries (%)**

<i>Possible Responses</i>	<i>Respondents from Kazakhstan</i>	<i>Respondents from Kyrgyzstan</i>	<i>Respondents from Uzbekistan</i>	<i>Respondents from Tajikistan</i>
Russia	29.6	26.0	25.1	42.2
United States of America	23.7	31.1	18.8	16.1
EU countries	16.3	9.6	15.2	7.7
China	14.6	6.8	5.4	8.3
Central Asian country	5.2	3.8	4.0	6.8
South Korea	0.2	0.5	5.7	0.2
Turkey	0.2	1.7	—	0.6
Malaysia	0.1	—	—	0.1

Table 6 (continued)

<i>Possible Responses</i>	<i>Respondents from Kazakhstan</i>	<i>Respondents from Kyrgyzstan</i>	<i>Respondents from Uzbekistan</i>	<i>Respondents from Tajikistan</i>
Singapore	0.1	—	—	—
UAE	—	0.7	—	—
Japan	—	0.1	—	—
Canada	—	0.1	—	0.2
Other countries	—	—	—	2.8
None	0.6	—	18.5	0.6
Undecided / No answer	9.4	19.6	7.3	14.4
<i>Total</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>

Cooperation in the Educational Sphere

One of the most quickly developing directions of cultural exchange between Kazakhstan and Korea is that of language studies. Between 2004 and 2017, over 200 Korean students completed a course in Kazakh language at the Hankuk University of Foreign Studies (Seoul). The interest in studying the Kazakh language in South Korea is constantly growing.

Table 7

Foreign Students in Korean Higher Education Institutions

	<i>Total</i>	<i>Receiving Higher Education</i>	<i>Studying Korean Language</i>	<i>Studying Other Languages</i>
Total	123,192	86,729	39,450	13
China	69,413	52,300	17,113	0
Korean diaspora members	174	163	11	0
Vietnam	15,771	5,145	10,626	0
Mongolia	6,115	3,171	2,944	0
Japan	2,711	2,097	614	0

Table 7 (continued)

	<i>Total</i>	<i>Receiving Higher Education</i>	<i>Studying Korean Language</i>	<i>Studying Other Languages</i>
Uzbekistan	2,601	1,617	983	1
U.S.	1,543	1,390	153	0
Indonesia	1,466	1,289	177	0
Pakistan	1,395	1,315	80	0
France	1,277	1,188	89	0
India	1,259	1,125	134	0
Taiwan	1,176	897	279	0
Malaysia	1,155	1,001	154	0
Bangladesh	890	848	42	0
Kazakhstan	873	738	135	0
Russian Federation	866	609	257	0
Nepal	792	695	97	0
Germany	791	778	13	0
Philippines	720	609	111	0
Other countries	12,378	9,917	2,449	12

Source: [https://www.immigration.go.kr/doc_html/attach/imm/f2017//20170324279568_1_1.hwp.files/Sections1.html], 28 February, 2018.

In Kazakhstan, Korean is taught at the leading universities, such as the L.N. Gumilev Eurasian National University (Astana), Al-Farabi Kazakh National University (Almaty), Abay Kazakh National Pedagogical University (Almaty), Ablai Khan Kazakh University of International Relations and World Languages (Almaty), Kazakhstan Institute of Management, Economics and Strategic Research (Almaty), Kazakh Academy of Transport and Communications (Almaty). Exchange students from South Korea are studying at these institutions as well. The language school of the Korean Cultural Center of the Embassy of Republic of South Korea in Astana is also popular, with up to 300 people studying there annually. There's always a waiting list to sign up for a course at this school, which testifies to the popularity of the Korean language among the youth.

Aside from the language courses, approximately 700 students from Kazakhstan study at different levels of South Korean higher educational institutions annually.

Ties in the Scientific Sphere

It turned out to be extremely difficult to find experts on Korean studies in Kazakhstan. Despite the presence of the Korean Studies Center at the Al-Farabi Kazakh National University (Almaty), a school of Korean studies hasn't yet been formed in the country, since there are few experts and research associates with thorough familiarity with the Korean language. The situation is only slightly better in South Korea—there are several centers and institutes for the studies of Central Asian countries. In 2005, the Association of Experts on Kazakhstan was established in the Republic of Korea, and there are specialists in the country who are fluent in Kazakh language and specialize in studying Kazakhstan.

Nonetheless, higher educational institutions and research institutes in both countries are making efforts to support and develop ties in the scientific sphere: young Korean scientists are defending their master's theses and doctorates in Kazakhstan, scientists from Kazakhstan are also receiving scientific degrees in various spheres of science in South Korea.

Conclusion

It is important to note that the countries are not yet sufficiently active in developing their cooperation in the educational sphere. Getting closer through education is one of the most efficient forms of developing bilateral cooperation. It is entirely clear that the educational collaboration between Kazakhstan and South Korea has great potential and development opportunities that are not used to the fullest extent. A promising vector of cooperation is the establishment of a joint Kazakh-South Korean university, similar to the successfully functioning Kazakh-British and Kazakh-American Universities, as well as joint high schools similar to the Kazakh-Turkish lyceums. The establishment of such institutions will create a foundation for the implementation of a poly-lingual educational strategy, announced in Kazakhstan, wherein the education is supposed to be conducted in four languages—Kazakh, Korean, English and Russian.⁹

There is currently a vital need to consider the possibility of launching a joint research project or center on studying various aspects of Kazakh-Korean relations, which would help consolidate the efforts of the existing experts and create the conditions for the training and further development of scientists and specialists. These centers and projects could operate based on grant programs, financed by the state or committed private structures of both countries, which would assist in improving the quality of scientific analysis and expertise of bilateral relations.

The cooperation between the two countries is currently focused on the power sector, nuclear industry, construction and finance. Due to this fact, it seems feasible to approve government contracts in the framework of the Bolashak program, which prepares young professionals in the above-mentioned spheres in South Korea, aiming to create a human resource reserve for participation in joint projects.¹⁰ The Bolashak program has been established by the Decree of the President of Republic of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev dated 5 November, 1993. The program aims to prepare specialists for the priority spheres of the country's economy. It entails academic education, practical internships in the leading international companies and universities.¹¹

⁹ See: R.E. Kudaibergenova, "Kazakhstan i Iuzhnaia Koreia: novye gorizonty sotrudnichestva v oblasti obrazovaniia," available at [<http://group-global.org/ru/publication/22203-kazahstan-i-yuzhnaya-koreya-novye-gorizonty-sotrudnichestva-v-oblasti-obrazovaniya>], 24 March, 2018.

¹⁰ See: *Ibidem*.

¹¹ For more on the Bolashak program, see: [<https://www.bolashak.gov.kz/ru/o-stipendii/istoriya-razvitiya.html>].

As for the development of tourism, the existing flow of medical tourists to Korea needs to be institutionalized and systematized. This flow is currently of a chaotic nature, there is frequent deception on the part of intermediaries and translators. It would be rational to create a unified national medical tourism operator, which would refer patients through tried and tested channels fully accompanied from airport to the hospital and back, with total exclusion of the entire chain of intermediaries.

Despite the small drop in popularity of the Korean wave (*hallyu*), the soft power of the Korean culture is still felt in Kazakhstan. Meanwhile, the familiarization with the culture of Kazakhstan is revived only in the run-up to official events.

Experts note the need to form a positive image of Kazakhstan in South Korea, first and foremost, as the leader of the international anti-nuclear movement. One of the vectors may be the active presence of Kazakhstan in South Korea's information field, including joint pre-production of documentary and feature films.

Cultural and humanitarian collaboration is a significant element in solidifying the relations between the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Republic of Korea, which currently requires expansion and enhancement. Cultural and humanitarian cooperation is capable of directly affecting the quality of the growing political and economic rapport between the two countries, which we are now witnessing.
