

Roza Turarbekava

## **Kazakhstan foreign policy during presidency of Kasym-Jomart Tokayev (2019-2023)**

### **Abstract**

The article examines changes in the foreign policy of Kazakhstan during the transition period of the transfer of power from N. Nazarbayev to K. Tokayev. When analyzing the changes, internal and external factors of foreign policy were identified, relations with priority partners such as: China, Russia, the USA and the countries of Central Asia were characterized; changes in the perception of their foreign policy through the analysis of conceptual documents. The most important internal factors were identified: covid-19, protests in 2022, changes in the institutional design of the political system. The following determining external factors were identified: Russia's war in Ukraine, sanctions against Kazakhstan's allies (Russia and Belarus), competition between big actors. In conclusion, conclusions were drawn that the role of China in the foreign policy of Kazakhstan is playing an increasingly stabilizing role, in contrast to Russia and the United States, whose rivalry represents a risk factor.

**Keywords:** transition, foreign policy, Kazakhstan, protests, war

### **Introduction**

Over 30 years of independence, the Kazakhstan government has achieved significant results in the foreign affairs. Regardless of the number of issues, threats and challenges, Astana is still following basic designated principles: multi vectorism, balance, pragmatism and peacekeeping approach. One of the major elements of Kazakhstan foreign policy are proposed anti-nuclear initiatives. For instance, closing of the Semipalatinsk nuclear test site, creation of the Central Asian Zone free of nuclear weaponry, and opening of the IAEA LEU Bank. Several agreements regarding border delimitation with neighboring countries such as Russia, China, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan. Majority of these countries

signed border demarcation agreements and made respective procedures. Most of the contentious issues were solved by the end of 2022<sup>1</sup>.

From an institutional perspective foreign affairs were majorly formed by the head of the state, during the whole period of Kazakhstan independence. It is mostly due to Kazakhstan being a presidential republic, where the head of the state has almost unlimited authority and is a major political actor in shaping foreign policy. From the creation of the independent republic (Constitutional law „About the state independence of Republic of Kazakhstan”) and until the 19 III 2019 president of Kazakhstan was N. Nazarbayev. Initiated in March 2019, the process of power transit finally concluded in January 2022, when Nazarbayev resigned as the chairperson of the Security Council of the republic<sup>2</sup>. Modern day foreign policy period is a time of power transit with external and internal risk-factors.

Complex internal factors include covid-19 pandemic and social pressure buildup. Protests of January 2022 and consequential court procedures in regard to protesters, surveillance. Combating corruption and influence of Nazarbayev „clan”. External factors include the ongoing war of Russia in Ukraine (and related political stance of Kazakhstan state). Possible sanctions and hardships related to oil and gas transit through the Russian Federation. There is also possible risk related to secondary sanctions from the US and EU trade limitations, caused by Kazakh businesses bypassing imposed limitations.

### **Power transit from N. Nazarbayev to K. Tokayev: principles of succession and new elements in foreign policy (2019 – beginning of 2022)**

19 III 2019, former president N. Nazarbayev have signed new order of resignation and delegating powers of head of the state to Senate Chairperson Kasym-Jomart Tokaev with accordance to constitutional norms<sup>3</sup>. Same order had allowed Nazarbayev to stay as a Chairperson of the Security Council<sup>4</sup>.

Power transit has been planned since 2018. In particular, new law regarding the Security Council was passed. According to this new law, powers within the

---

<sup>1</sup> *Демаркация государственной границы Республики Казахстан* [15 I 2020], <https://www.gov.kz/memleket/entities/kgk/press/article/details/2328?lang=ru> (25 VI 2023).

<sup>2</sup> *Закон Республики Казахстан „О внесении изменений в некоторые законодательные акты Республики Казахстан”* [7 II 2023], <https://adilet.zan.kz/rus/docs/Z2200000106#z14> (15 V 2023).

<sup>3</sup> *Об исполнении полномочий Президента Республики Казахстан* [19 III 2019], [https://www.akorda.kz/ru/legal\\_acts/decrees/ob-ispolnenii-polnomochii-prezidenta-respubliki-kazakhstan](https://www.akorda.kz/ru/legal_acts/decrees/ob-ispolnenii-polnomochii-prezidenta-respubliki-kazakhstan) (15 V 2023).

<sup>4</sup> Ibidem.

cabinet were displaced in such design, that ministers of foreign, internal affairs and security were responsible before the chairperson of the Security Council and not the president<sup>5</sup>. Only after January 2022 protests, on 7 II new changes were added which made Tokayev chairman person. Thus from an institutional perspective power transit lasted from 19 III 2019 till 7 II 2022.

Early presidential election was called on 9 VI 2019. Tokayev's pre-election campaign was called „Prosperity for everyone: Succession. Justice. Progress” and aimed at solving major challenges in internal policy<sup>6</sup>. For foreign affairs, the succession principle was adopted.

There was also an indirect element to foreign policy – budget cuts for significant image-building events, latter were much common during Nazarbayev rule and were one of the features of public policy (including foreign one). Overall it was widely considered that because Tokayev was standing at the beginnings of diplomatic service in Kazakhstan, where he hold multiple positions within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (including the minister seat), principle of succession would be considered<sup>7</sup>.

Succession and several other differences in more economical and pragmatic principles were designated as central elements in domestic and foreign policy of the Tokayev administration in the beginning of the transit period.

In order to analyze continuation of succession and slow integration of pragmatic principles into Kazakhstan's foreign policy, there should be examination of foreign policy concepts. In the analyzed period two documents were in action: Concept of foreign policy of Republic of Kazakhstan for 2014-2020 and Concept of foreign policy of Republic of Kazakhstan for 2020-2030. First document was designed and implemented by the Nazarbaev administration, while the second by the Tokayev administration.

Major goal of foreign policy framed in Concept of foreign policy of Republic of Kazakhstan for 2014-2020 by Nazarbaev administration was making trend of „positive image of the state in global community”. This goal was prioritized over another one which is „industry diversification and increasing economic competitiveness of the state”<sup>8</sup>. Thus budget cuts on image events mentioned

---

<sup>5</sup> Закон Республики Казахстан „О Совете Безопасности Республики Казахстан” [5 VI 2018], <https://adilet.zan.kz/rus/docs/Z1800000178> (15 VI 2023).

<sup>6</sup> О мерах по реализации предвыборной программы Президента РК „Благополучие для всех! Преемственность. Справедливость. Прогресс” [19 VI 2019], <https://adilet.zan.kz/rus/docs/U190000027U#z10> (20 VI 2023).

<sup>7</sup> Официальный портрет Президента Республики Казахстан Касым-Жомарта Кемелевича Токаева [30 XI 2022], <https://www.akorda.kz/ru/president/president> (20 VI 2023).

<sup>8</sup> Указ Президента РК „О Концепции внешней политики Республики Казахстан на 2014-2020 гг.” [21 I 2014], <https://adilet.zan.kz/rus/docs/U1400000741> (15 VI 2023).

earlier, were not just minimal efforts to fix the trend. Later it becomes apparent that concept changes were much deeper<sup>9</sup>.

However, the succession principle is seen largely in priorities of foreign policy. For instance in 2014-2020 Concept several regional priorities were defined: 1) Central Asian region; 2) Eurasian integration (with emphasis on „keeping political sovereignty” and „economical expediency”<sup>10</sup>; 3) International law procedures regarding state border, defining status of Caspian Sea; 4) Multilateral cooperation within international organizations.

Major focus point of Tokaev was on domestic policy, due to institutional conditions during power transit. In accordance with the pre-election platform in 2019 he defined a reform package, which was announced on 2 IX 2019 during an official message to parliament and society<sup>11</sup>. Although he repeated his allegiance to the succession of Nazarbayev policy, he also suggested a social-political reform package, which would strengthen bonds between government and civil society, disband the resource oriented approach. Foreign policy had limited mentioning. In particular he said: „Strategic goal is to strengthen the country’s image in Central Asia as a major player”<sup>12</sup>. Foremost it was based around industrial and technological development, regional cooperation. Additionally another goal was added – support for domestic business on foreign markets. But all mentioned wasn’t anything special, everything was declared by the Concept of foreign policy for 2014-2020.

Succession is also equal to multivector policy. For the entirety of Nazarbayev presidency, experts like Wilder Alejandro Sanchez (2020) noted that there was balancing between relations with Russia, China and the USA<sup>13</sup>. Such a view on Kazakhstan’s foreign policy was defined as „New big game” which meant major powers competing for Central Asian region (analogous to „Big game” between British and Russian empire in XIX century. This perspective excluded states of Central Asia from being proactive players. This definition was heavily used by journalists<sup>14</sup> for simplifying the region down to major players’ interests.

<sup>9</sup> *Распоряжение Президента РК от 25.05.2020 „О мерах по сокращению расходов в центральных, местных, государственных органах и субъектах квазигосударственного сектора”* [25 V 2020] <https://adilet.zan.kz/rus/docs/N2000000108> (21 VI 2023).

<sup>10</sup> *Указ Президента РК...*

<sup>11</sup> *Послание Главы государства Касым-Жомарта Токаева народу Казахстана* [2 IX 2019], [https://www.akorda.kz/ru/addresses/addresses\\_of\\_president/poslanie-glavy-gosudarstva-kasym-zhomarta-tokaeva-narodu-kazahstana](https://www.akorda.kz/ru/addresses/addresses_of_president/poslanie-glavy-gosudarstva-kasym-zhomarta-tokaeva-narodu-kazahstana) (15 VI 2023).

<sup>12</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>13</sup> W.A. Sanches, *A Rising Global Player: Kazakhstan’s Foreign Policy in the 2020s* [V 2020], [https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/media/uploads/documents/KI\\_200514\\_cable%2051\\_v1.pdf](https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/media/uploads/documents/KI_200514_cable%2051_v1.pdf) (21 IV 2023).

<sup>14</sup> *The New Great Game in Asia* [2 I 1996 / 12 XI 2020], <https://www.nytimes.com/1996/01/02/opinion/the-new-great-game-in-asia.html> (15 V 2023).

Regardless of succession principle and balance between major actors, Kazakhstan was facing some old and new problems in relations with major players during the transition period.

Key partner in Kazakhstan's foreign policy is China, with which it shares a significant border. Strategic partnership agreement, announced by both sides, majorly emphasizes on trade and infrastructure development in accordance with such Chinese programs as the „Belt – Road” initiative. For instance one of the biggest trade hubs was built right on the state border – called Khorgas. In return, chinese companies are interested in land rich with rare elements and metals.

During analyzed period from 2019 to 2023 net trade has grown from 22.07 billion<sup>15</sup> to 31.4 billion USD<sup>16</sup>. China keeps being one of the major trade partners and investors in Kazakhstan. For Kazakhstan trade with China is not only a large market but also an access to the seaports. Significance of China is continuously high. Although there are some issues in Kazakh-Chinese relations: water resource management, treatment of Kazakh ethnic minority in Xinjiang and anti-Chinese sentiment in Kazakhstan society<sup>17</sup>.

*Joint usage of transboundary river bodies: Balchash lake basin in particular Ili river and Irtysh river.* China consumes half of the water volume in the basin, which results in net flow of rivers to go down and contribute to lake shrinking. This is a dangerous situation for local farmers, and it has become a regional environmental problem since Balkhash is the biggest water body in South-Eastern Kazakhstan. It should be mentioned that water deficiency in the region is quite prominent, and there are no mechanisms currently that would compensate for this. Regardless of problem recognition and initial talks with the Chinese side, Kazakhstan couldn't reach success on that matter. Those talks were initiated by Kazakhstan in 2013, however there is no solid agreement<sup>18</sup>.

*Second issue is the current treatment of the Kazakh ethnic minority in Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous region (Xinjiang).* Because of radical and harsh discrimination of Beijing against muslim population of Xinjiang – mostly Uighurs, Kazakhs, Kyrgyz and Tajik people, there is growing discontent in China and countries

---

<sup>15</sup> В 2019 объем торговли между Китаем и Казахстаном увеличился на 10,3 проц., *Синьхуа Новости* [23 III 2020], [http://russian.news.cn/2020-03/23/c\\_138907529.htm](http://russian.news.cn/2020-03/23/c_138907529.htm) (20 VI 2023).

<sup>16</sup> Объем взаимной торговли между Казахстаном и Китаем бьет исторические рекорды [20 I 2020], <https://www.gov.kz/memleket/entities/mfa-beijing/press/news/details/492232?lang=ru> (21 VI 2023).

<sup>17</sup> Р. Ошикбаев, Ф. Жакыпова, Б. Исаев, К. Колесник, *Оценка восприятия Китая в казахстанском обществе: мифы и реальность* [2 II 2021], [https://ca-c.org.ru/journal/2021/journal\\_rus/cac-02/02.shtml](https://ca-c.org.ru/journal/2021/journal_rus/cac-02/02.shtml) (21 VI 2023).

<sup>18</sup> *Казахстан и Китай готовят Соглашение по водodelению* [17 VI 2022], [https://www.inform.kz/ru/kazakhstan-i-kitay-gotovyat-soglasheniya-po-vododeleniyu\\_a3945559](https://www.inform.kz/ru/kazakhstan-i-kitay-gotovyat-soglasheniya-po-vododeleniyu_a3945559) (21 VI 2023).

of the region. Problem was brought into international spotlight by OHCHR<sup>19</sup>. According to various sources, Kazakh minority is being subjected to prosecution and torture in so called „re-education camps”. This minority nonetheless is the second largest in Xinjiang<sup>20</sup>. Regardless that on an official level this issue has no presence, social pressure from relatives of the affected caused public officials to have secret talks<sup>21</sup>. Thus Kazakh people in China got the opportunity to relinquish Chinese citizenship through consular embassies in Almaty and Astana. But the issue remains unresolved, mostly because covid-19 and therefore Chinese lockdown stopped this route entirely.

Harsh treatment against muslim population in Xinjiang (against Kazakhs in particular) and disproportional involvement of Chinese companies in energy sector, unbalanced participation of Kazakhstan in „Belt – Road” initiative, and steady growth of Kazakhstan foreign debt to China has played as factors to anti-Chinese sentiment deepening. In 2016 mass protests were staged against „land reform”<sup>22</sup>, and in 2019 before Tokayev visit to Beijing several meetings were held against Chinese owned factories<sup>23</sup>. In American publisher „Diplomat” Kazakh-Chinese relations were characterized as „much complicated reality” meaning all those issues mentioned earlier<sup>24</sup>.

The USA plays a special role in Kazakhstan foreign policy. One of the last visits of Nazarbayev was in January 2018. This is the first instance of a regional leader being in the White house, where he met with D. Trump.

It’s worth mentioning that for the whole time of Kazakh-American relations economic approach was the dominating factor. Additionally, one of the key matters in bilateral relations was nuclear decommissioning and stopping spread of nuclear weaponry. Thus Kazakhstan decided to disband the nuclear arsenal from the USSR in early 90s. The US has participated in transporting, desactivation of the weaponry and territory decontamination. First hand it was about the Semipa-

---

<sup>19</sup> Доклад ООН: КНР несет ответственность за „серьезные нарушения” прав человека в провинции Синьцзян [31 VIII 2022], <https://news.un.org/ru/story/2022/08/1430722> (21 VI 2023).

<sup>20</sup> Казахи за границей: сколько их насчитывается и в каких странах они живут? [17 VIII 2009], [https://online.zakon.kz/Document/?doc\\_id=30458632&pos=4;-98#pos=4;-98](https://online.zakon.kz/Document/?doc_id=30458632&pos=4;-98#pos=4;-98) (21 VI 2023).

<sup>21</sup> Положение этнических казахов в Китае прокомментировали в МИД [31 V 2021], [https://www.kt.kz/rus/politics/polozhenie\\_eticheskikh\\_kazahov\\_v\\_kitae\\_prokomentirovali\\_v\\_mid\\_1377913652.html](https://www.kt.kz/rus/politics/polozhenie_eticheskikh_kazahov_v_kitae_prokomentirovali_v_mid_1377913652.html) (21 VI 2023).

<sup>22</sup> Земля – народу. Массовые протесты вынудили президента Казахстана остановиться реформу [5 V 2016], <https://fergananews.com/news/24706> (21 VI 2023).

<sup>23</sup> Антикитайские протесты и угроза „масштабного политического кризиса” [4 IX 2019], <https://www.currenttime.tv/a/kazakhstan-china-protest/30146156.html> (21 VI 2023).

<sup>24</sup> E. Albert, *Kazakh President Tokayev Goes to Beijing* [12 V 2019], <https://thediplomat.com/2019/09/kazakh-president-tokayev-goes-to-beijing/> (21 VI 2023).

latinsk nuclear test site. This cooperation had two dimensions: security and trade. USA has become biggest importer of Kazakhstan uranium (35%)<sup>25</sup>.

Returning to the economic dimension, it is apparent that American companies in the first years of independence showed a big interest in oil reserves and had become the first big investors in the sector. For the first 15 years of Kazakhstan independence, the US remained as a major foreign investor. Now they hold second place after China. However focus on energy sectors remains. Total volume of direct foreign investment from the US is estimate at 62 billion USD, which is record high for Central Asian region<sup>26</sup>. Political value to this dimension is manifested in the creation of Foreign investors council with the presidential administration. This was established during the Nazarbayev presidency. There are several big corporations in this council such as: Chevron, ExxonMobil, General Electric, Philip Morris, JP Morgan Chase, Citibank, Baker McKenzie. However trade with the USA wasn't on such a level as China, Russia and Germany. For 2021 this trade was estimated as 2.2 billion USD<sup>27</sup>.

Political cooperation in the security sector against radical islamism started to grow with its presence. Also in order to make cargo transportation from Afghanistan (2001-2021) possible, there was established a humanitarian operation „Jusan” designed to return kazakh citizens from Syria<sup>28</sup>.

In order to solve questions regarding regional politics, in 2015 USA proposed an initiative for the region called „C5+1”, which is functioning with ministers of foreign affairs in Central Asia. From that year meetings were regularly scheduled twice a year, until 2023 in America. Major goals of discussion platform are support for independence, prosperity and security of Central Asia<sup>29</sup>. Whole event was timed with the ending of the military mission of NATO in Afghanistan in 2015. In the Kazakhstan establishment this platform is labeled as a key event of political cooperation.

China and Russia reacted sensitively to this event, calling it „spreading American influence” in Kazakhstan and other Central Asian countries. Russian Minister of foreign relations Lavrov has declared that „the US try to misuse C5+1”<sup>30</sup>,

---

<sup>25</sup> *The United States imports most of the uranium it uses as fuel. U.S. Energy Information Administration* [7 VII 2021], <https://www.eia.gov/energyexplained/nuclear/where-our-uranium-comes-from.php> (21 VI 2023).

<sup>26</sup> *Сотрудничество Республики Казахстан с Соединенными Штатами Америки* [8 X 2019], <https://www.gov.kz/memleket/entities/mfa/press/article/details/531?lang=ru> (21 VI 2023).

<sup>27</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>28</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>29</sup> *C5+1 Diplomatic Platform. U.S. Department of State* [27 II 2023], <https://www.state.gov/c51-diplomatic-platform/> (21 VI 2023).

<sup>30</sup> *Лавров указал на стремление США злоупотребить форматом „C5+1” в Центральной Азии* [15 I 2018], <https://tass.ru/politika/4874195> (21 VI 2023).

or „USA wants to weaken links between Russia and countries of Central Asia”<sup>31</sup>. China has a similar but less pronounced response. However China was trying to limit US pressure on itself using Kazakhstan and muslim minority in Xinjiang as a treatment<sup>32</sup>.

Major pressure issue with relations to the US – perception of American politics by big authoritarian players. Thus Russia and China tried to replicate the event with their own conditions. Those events similar in design were aiming at doing American strategy, yet using same methods against them, which in return forms conflicted geopolitical aspects.

First visit of Tokaev as a president was made to the US in September 2019. It was planned for the UN General Assembly meeting. In the framework of the visit, there was a meeting on the Atlantic council platform with American politicians and experts. There Tokayev confirmed his allegiance to politics of his predecessor, Nazarbayev, and results that were reached during official visit of Nazarbayev in 2018<sup>33</sup>.

Tight relations with Russia were affected by a number of factors. First – soviet „legacy” of military and infrastructure, social and economic features. Second – geographical isolation in the midst of Eurasian Continent with the longest border sharing with Russia. Third – similar political system with consequential negative side effects. Fourth – colonial and post-soviet perception of Kazakhstan by Russian political elites and partially by Kazakh political elites.

Base document for bilateral relations is „Agreement between Republic of Kazakhstan and Russian Federation on good-neighboring and allyship in XXI century” (2013)<sup>34</sup>.

It seals close connections in all sectors, especially military and political. The USSR military „legacy”. Soviet „наследие” is defined by role of Kazakhstan in Soviet period. In particular, its territory was used for strategic military sites like Semipalatinsk nuclear test site, cosmoport „Baikonur”, war testing sites of 929th State flight-testing center/testing site Sary-Agan.

---

<sup>31</sup> Лавров заявил, что США пытаются ослабить связи России со странами Центральной Азии [2 IV 2021], <https://www.asiaplustj.info/ru/news/tajikistan/politics/20210402/lavrov-zayavil-chto-ssha-pitayutsya-oslabit-svyazi-rossii-so-stranami-tsentralnoi-azii> (21 VI 2023).

<sup>32</sup> China says confident of Central Asia support before Pompeo visit [31 XII 2019], <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-usa-xinjiang-idUSKBN1YZ0N3> (22 VI 2023).

<sup>33</sup> Глава государства провел встречу с представителями политических и экспертных кругов США [23 IX 2019], [https://www.akorda.kz/ru/events/international\\_community/foreign\\_visits/glava-gosudarstva-provel-vstrechu-s-predstavatelyami-politicheskikh-i-ekspertnyh-krugov-ssha#:~:text=23 сентября 2019 года,\(Атлантический совет\)](https://www.akorda.kz/ru/events/international_community/foreign_visits/glava-gosudarstva-provel-vstrechu-s-predstavatelyami-politicheskikh-i-ekspertnyh-krugov-ssha#:~:text=23%20сентября%202019%20года,(Атлантический%20совет)) (22 VI 2023).

<sup>34</sup> Договор между Республикой Казахстан и Российской Федерацией о добрососедстве и сотрудничестве в XXI веке [11 XI 2014], [https://kazembassy.ru/rus/sotrudnichestvo/dvustoronnee\\_sotrudnichestvo/dogovornaya\\_baza/?cid=8](https://kazembassy.ru/rus/sotrudnichestvo/dvustoronnee_sotrudnichestvo/dogovornaya_baza/?cid=8) (21 VI 2023).



Semipalatinsk nuclear test site was closed and the Republic of Kazakhstan disbanded nuclear weaponry and testing. Besides, Kazakhstan continues to stay faithful to nuclear disarmament and limiting the spread of nuclear weaponry. However all other sites remain functional as Russian military sites. There are several agreements regulating their usage: Agreement on renting „Baikonur” complex (1994, 2008), Agreement on renting test fields and 929th State flight-testing center of Russian Federation (1996, 2005)<sup>35</sup>, Agreement on usage of testing site Sary-Shagan (1996, 2005). All those documents were signed in the mid 90s for 20 years and they include automated re-signing even without actual ratification. They could be broken only through special permission. In Kazakh Majliss this question was brought up, regarding irrational land usage, but only sporadically. And in comparison with Chinese meetings, anti-Russian protests weren't taking place. But this problem has some potency, since those polygons comprise 86,000 km<sup>2</sup> <sup>36</sup>. This area is not available for any usage and it is constantly contaminated. Additionally to military agreements, we can pick an Agreement on cooperation in security of external borders (1994), Agreement on military cooperation. Out of 8 bilateral agreements, 5 are military oriented<sup>37</sup>.

Since Kazakhstan is a landlocked country and equally distanced from oceans, there is importance in land infrastructure for foreign trade. One of the major challenges to domestic and foreign policy is participation in trans- Eurasian transport corridors. As it was mentioned, Kazakhstan joined the Chinese initiative „One road – one belt”. And regardless of warm relations between Moscow and Beijing for Russian establishment it was seen as a competition for influence on Kazakhstan. This bogged development of border hubs and transport programs<sup>38</sup>. In particular it was related to high-speed rail. Out of total 18 railway connections, 12 are on Russian border and only 2 are Chinese<sup>39</sup>. Nazarbayev announced national program Nurly-Zhol, designed to balance out connections with other countries and inside the state<sup>40</sup>.

---

<sup>35</sup> *Договоры* [11 XI 2018], [https://kazembassy.ru/rus/sotrudnichestvo/dvustoronnee\\_sotrudnichestvo/dogovornaya\\_baza/?cid=8](https://kazembassy.ru/rus/sotrudnichestvo/dvustoronnee_sotrudnichestvo/dogovornaya_baza/?cid=8) (21 VI 2023).

<sup>36</sup> *Военные полигоны. Сколько земли и за какую плату арендует Россия в Казахстане* [22 V 2023], [https://tengrinews.kz/kazakhstan\\_news/voennye-poligonyi-skolko-zemli-za-kakuyu-platu-arenduet-499280/](https://tengrinews.kz/kazakhstan_news/voennye-poligonyi-skolko-zemli-za-kakuyu-platu-arenduet-499280/) (21 VI 2023).

<sup>37</sup> *Договоры...*

<sup>38</sup> Ю. Тавровский, *Шелковый путь обрывается в России* [12 V 2017], [https://www.ng.ru/kartblansh/2017-05-12/3\\_6986\\_kartblansh.html](https://www.ng.ru/kartblansh/2017-05-12/3_6986_kartblansh.html) (21 VI 2023).

<sup>39</sup> *Казахстанские железные дороги – железная дорога* [18 V 2020], <https://mikeleloconte.ru/kazahstanskije-zheleznyje-dorogi---zheleznaya-doroga/> (21 VI 2023).

<sup>40</sup> *Об утверждении Государственной программы инфраструктурного развития „Нурлы жол” на 2020-2025 гг. 31 декабря 2019* [30 XII 2022], <https://adilet.zan.kz/rus/docs/P1900001055> (21 VI 2023).

Infrastructural imbalance with affinity to Russian is spread to oil products transportation. In particular, biggest share of Kazakhstan oil (60,000 metric tons in 2020) is exported via Caspian pipeline consortium (CPS) created by Russia, Kazakhstan and others<sup>41</sup>. Kazmunaigaz has 21% of shares, while the Russian side owns 31%. Generally in Kazakh-Russian relations, deep intervention of Russian influence is common, especially in military, political and economic sectors.

Trade between countries 2019-2021 was growing from 19.6 billion<sup>42</sup> to 25.6 billion USD<sup>43</sup>. In the meantime, negative net trade on the Kazakhstan side was about 8-11 billion. Russian goods have a lot of added value, unlike Kazakh ones which creates such a situation.

Social aspect of bilateral relations is mostly about the Russian ethnic minority and Russian language. Russian is second in usage after Kazakh, and has official status according to constitutional norms.

Unfortunately, the most recent data regarding Russian proficiency is from the population census of 2009<sup>44</sup>. In the next census there weren't any questions regarding this factor. Considering the fact that Russians comprised 15% of the population, with 84% of the total population using Russian in 2009. It creates an environment very susceptible to Russian informational sources and Russian politics. Major trend of recent years is educational migration to Russia. It makes Russian soft power in Kazakhstan quite visible.

Special relations between Kazakhstan and Russia are also manifested in the form of integration strategy, that is as well succession in foreign policy. Nazarbayev proposed to create Eurasian Union in 1994. This idea was used by Putin in 2011 and implemented in 2015 with the creation of Eurasian Economic Union. Kazakhstan alongside with Belarus and Russia is founder-member of this integration<sup>45</sup>. However, problems that were plaguing this organization since its foundation, were conceptual and institutional.

In the end, experts concluded that Vladimir Putin is using that project to limit Eurasian proper from „competitors” from east and west alike<sup>46</sup>. Furthermore, his

<sup>41</sup> *Транспортировка нефти. Годовой отчет 2020. Казмунайгаз* [2 II 2021], <https://ar2020.kmg.kz/ru/strategic-report/operating/oil-transportation> (23 VI 2023).

<sup>42</sup> *Торговля между Россией и Казахстаном в 2019 г* [12 II 2020], <https://russian-trade.com/reports-and-reviews/2022-02/torgovlya-mezhdu-rossiy-i-kazahstanom-v-2021-g/> (23 VI 2023).

<sup>43</sup> *Торговля России и Казахстана в 2021* [12 II 2022], <https://russian-trade.com/reports-and-reviews/2022-02/torgovlya-mezhdu-rossiy-i-kazahstanom-v-2021-g/> (23 VI 2023).

<sup>44</sup> *Итоги национальной переписи населения 2009 г.* [11 X 2011], <https://stat.gov.kz/ru/national/2009/general/> (23 VI 2023).

<sup>45</sup> Р. Турарбекова, Е. Семак, Е. Довгань, *Евразийский экономический союз: интеграция между идеальным и реальным* [2 XI 2017], [http://minskdialogue.by/research/reports/evraziiskii-ekonomicheskii-soiuz-integratsiia-mezhdu-idealnym-i-realnym\\_](http://minskdialogue.by/research/reports/evraziiskii-ekonomicheskii-soiuz-integratsiia-mezhdu-idealnym-i-realnym_) (23 VI 2023).

<sup>46</sup> R.M. Turarbekava, *Eurasian integration: from post-Soviet to New Regional Projects* [22 XI 2019], <https://www.kent.ac.uk/politics/rs-gcrf-compass/Turarbekova-2474-Article-Text-16305-1-18-20191220-1.pdf> (23 VI 2023).

intention was to promote Russian companies and allow their insertion of their businesses and standards, aiming to increase sphere of influence and strengthen reintegration of post-soviet regions.

In discussion related to future development strategy of EAEU in 2020, president Tokayev lightly rejected further deepening inside the project, and underlined solving current issues instead<sup>47</sup>. Thus he indicated new element in foreign policy, designed to be much stricter on following principles of sovereignty, independence and pragmatism.

The Panedic of covid-19 had a significant effect on links in the framework of foreign affairs. Although the whole period of 2020-2021 remained rich with events. For instance, the new Concept of foreign policy for 2020-2030 was adopted in 2020. It was the first instance when such a concept was planned for 10 years, instead of 5 how it was earlier. Major principles, goals, key points and trends for state foreign policy were designed for decade ahead<sup>48</sup>. In contrast to 2014-2020 Concept, there was strong emphasis on „strengthening state independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity”<sup>49</sup>. As major regional priorities, Russia and China were designated. Major difference, the USA got third place instead of the Central Asian region. It was much uplifted thus for foreign policy, Central Asia played the same role as strengthening independence.

Neighboring bordering countries (such as Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan) received more attention from 2017-2018. Before 2014-2015 Kazakhstan positioned itself as a „eurasian” country. It is signified by Nazarbayev’s initiatives such as Eurasian union in 1994 and Eurasian Economic community in 2000. But with increased pressure from Russia with EAEU from 2011, there has been a shift with departure from such „eurasian” identity. Political Climate in Central Asia started to change with political changes in Uzbekistan (2017-2018) and the politics of Shavkat Mirziyoyev. Significant changes in Kazakh-Uzbek relations occurred with Tashkent „thaw” policy and managing Consulting meeting between Central Asian heads of states<sup>50</sup>. Significant increase in trade, broadening economic cooperation and managing border disputes<sup>51</sup>.

---

<sup>47</sup> Токаев не принял проект стратегии и развития ЕАЭС [19 V 2020], [https://forbes.kz/process/tokayev\\_ne\\_prinyal\\_proekt\\_strategii\\_razvitiya\\_eaes](https://forbes.kz/process/tokayev_ne_prinyal_proekt_strategii_razvitiya_eaes) (23 VI 2023).

<sup>48</sup> О Концепции внешней политики Республики Казахстан на 2020-2030-е гг. [9 III 2020], [https://www.akorda.kz/ru/legal\\_acts/decrees/o-koncepcii-vneshnei-politiki-respubliki-kazahstan-na-2020-2030-gody](https://www.akorda.kz/ru/legal_acts/decrees/o-koncepcii-vneshnei-politiki-respubliki-kazahstan-na-2020-2030-gody) (23 VI 2023).

<sup>49</sup> О Концепции внешней политики РК на 2014-2020 гг. [21 I 2014], <https://adilet.zan.kz/rus/docs/U1400000741> (20 VI 2023).

<sup>50</sup> Первая Консультативная встреча глав государств Центральной Азии [15 III 2018], <https://uza.uz/ru/posts/pervaya-konsultativnaya-vstrecha-glav-gosudarstv-tsentralnoy-15-03-2018> (23 VI 2023).

<sup>51</sup> Сотрудничество Узбекистана и Казахстана на современном этапе развития [4 XII 2021], <https://www.uzdaily.uz/ru/post/65720> (23 VI 2023).

In accordance with Foreign policy concept, the European element was included into priorities, but it is at the end of the list. It is not a coincidence, because EU remains biggest trade and investment partner of Kazakhstan<sup>52</sup>. Alongside with that, there is an agreement between EU and Kazakhstan that was signed in 2015. It was Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (EPCA), which is unique for the region. In 2019 EU strategy on Central Asia was adopted, which states a wide framework of cooperation. However there are a number of factors that weakens links between the EU and Kazakhstan. As was mentioned by some experts<sup>53</sup>: Firstly, its high levels of irritation caused by european politicians criticizing Kazakhstan political system, especially the voting process. Secondly, some critical statements regarding protests – in particular the Zhanaozen incident in 2011. Thirdly, the long process of EPCA ratification and complex bureaucracy in general. Tokayev as a president firstly made a public visit to Brussels after the pandemic in November 2021. There some questions regarding trade, economic and environmental cooperation were discussed<sup>54</sup>.

### **Kazakhstan Foreign policy 2022-2023: external and internal factors**

Power transit ended in February 2022 when, after January protests, Nazarbayev resigned from the position of chairman of the Security Council, and Tokayev became chairman instead. All the powers related to surveillance and foreign policy were left to him.

In 2022-2023 Kazakhstan's foreign policy was defined by a combination of factors and events, which were related directly or indirectly. Internal factors that defined foreign policy during the Tokayev administration were: protests in January 2022 and deficit of trust in government; social-political reform (including adopting new Constitution), limiting Nazarbayev's „clan”, presidential and parliamentary elections.

External factors – role of CSTO in managing order, Russian aggression and war against Ukraine. International sanctions against Russia and Belarus, military mobilization in Russia.

---

<sup>52</sup> *Торгово-экономические отношения. ЕС и Казахстан* [3 VIII 2021], [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/kazakhstan/evropeyskiy-soyuz-i-kazakhstan\\_ru?s=222](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/kazakhstan/evropeyskiy-soyuz-i-kazakhstan_ru?s=222) (22 VI 2023).

<sup>53</sup> В. Парамонов, А. Строков, З. Абдуганиева, *Влияние Европейского Союза на Центральную Азию: обзор, анализ, прогноз*, Алматы 2017, p. 19-25.

<sup>54</sup> *Глава государства Касым-Жомарт Токаев провел переговоры с Президентом Европейской Комиссии* [26 XI 2021], <https://www.akorda.kz/ru/glava-gosudarstva-kasym-zhomart-tokaev-provel-peregovory-s-prezidentom-evropeyskoy-komissii-26105438> (21 VI 2023).

Protests that ignited in the beginning of January 2022 were large scale and state encompassing. Every major city had a protest movement. Major motto was „Shal Ket” which roughly translates to „Old grudge go away” which was about Nazarbayev. Clashings in the South of the country caused violence and brutal suppression of protest movement with victims among civilians (out of 232 deceased 213 were civilians)<sup>55</sup>. According to Human Rights Watch report there wasn't any further investigation<sup>56</sup>. Protests had several dimensions – social, inner political, international. From a social dimension – relatives of those affected don't have results of independent investigation, and are very disappointed.

As a result of January events, several criminal cases were started and there were closed court hearings for high ranking officials involved<sup>57</sup>. Those were from the „Nazarbayev clan”. Tokayev fight with this political group is still ongoing, having its own risks similar to those that caused January protests, according to political expert Dosym Satpayev<sup>58</sup>. It in return poses a challenge to system stability. Reform, initiated by Tokayev, is aimed at eliminating factors of revolutionary uprisings.

On an international level Tokayev tried to find support in Russia. Decision to invite CSTO to guard strategic military sites had become a dangerous precedent for supporting autarky. In the history of CSTO it was a first operation of such manner<sup>59</sup>. It caused international backlash related to concerns that Russia would use that as an interference to matters of foreign state (in this case Kazakhstan). State secretary Antony Blinken stated that „USA has questions” regarding operation of CSTO<sup>60</sup>. China has adopted an observing approach, until the CSTO operation was announced and then it formally supported the operation with the

---

<sup>55</sup> *Список лиц, погибших во время январских событий* [16 VIII 2022], <https://www.gov.kz/memleket/entities/prokuror/press/news/details/413195?lang=ru> (23 VI 2023).

<sup>56</sup> *Казахстан: жертвы январских протестов не находят правосудия* [9 V 2022], <https://www.hrw.org/ru/news/2022/05/09/kazakhstan-no-justice-january-protest-victims> (13 V 2023).

<sup>57</sup> *Экс-главу КНБ Казахстана Карима Масимова приговорили к 18 годам лишения свободы по делу о госизмене и захвату власти* [24 IV 2023], <https://www.currenttime.tv/a/prigovor-karimu-masimovu/32377165.html> (13 V 2023).

<sup>58</sup> *„Токаев пока не трогает самых главных.” Досым Сатпаев об арестах родственников Назарбаева и о тех, кто ищет себе „нового хозяина”* [2 V 2022], <https://rus.azattyq.org/a/kazakhstan-political-scientist-on-the-arrests-of-nazarbayevs-relatives/31829125.html> (13 V 2023).

<sup>59</sup> *Обсуждение ситуации в Республике Казахстан и меры по нормализации обстановки в стране* [10 I 2022], [https://odkb-csto.org/news/news\\_odkb/10-yanvary-a-v-formate-videokonferentsii-sostoitsya-zasedanie-soveta-kollektivnoy-bezopasnosti-odkb-p/?clear\\_cache=Y%23loaded#loaded](https://odkb-csto.org/news/news_odkb/10-yanvary-a-v-formate-videokonferentsii-sostoitsya-zasedanie-soveta-kollektivnoy-bezopasnosti-odkb-p/?clear_cache=Y%23loaded#loaded) (13 V 2023).

<sup>60</sup> *U.S. Has Question About Kazakhstan's Request For CSTO Troops* [8 I 2022], <https://www.rferl.org/a/blinken-questions-kazakhstan-csto-troops/31644821.html> (13 V 2023).

condition of „honoring Kazakhstan’s sovereignty”<sup>61</sup>. CSTO operation ended on 19 I. According to experts (Libman, Levnizone) interference of CSTO showed that Russia acts as an arbitrary figure in conflicts on post-soviet proper<sup>62</sup>. The Tokayev administration showed how deeply is military-political dependence on Russia, which is partially limited by China and USA.

Key factor defining Kazakhstan international policy in 2022-2023 was large-scale invasion of Russia in Ukraine. The Tokayev administration stance was a significant subject in discussions of worldwide media and think tanks. Atlantic Council analytic K. Auezova noted that invasion of Russia in Ukraine sped up decolonization process in Kazakh society and state<sup>63</sup>. Near East South Asia Center analytic Andrea Zanini underlined that Kazakhstan has „not clear position regarding Russian-Ukrainian conflict” and government retains good relations with Kiev, so it could be defined as neutral<sup>64</sup>. Marie Dumoulin from ECFR has concluded that Kazakhstan retains big interest in the EU<sup>65</sup>. She states that this interest should be upheld in managing reforms.

Tokayev administration position regarding and Russia was crystalized in autumn 2022 on a meeting with Turkestan oblast community: firstly allegiance to principle of territorial integrity of all nations, secondly supporting goo-neighbor relations with bordering states (Russia included), lastly – support for those who run away from Russian military mobilization in 2022<sup>66</sup>.

External factor that has significant influence on politics and positions of Kazakhstan, is sanctions imposed by the US, EU and other states (Japan, Korea, UK, Canada and Australia) in Russia and Belarus. All listed countries are important economic and trade partners of Kazakhstan, involved in resource extraction. As Kazakhstan is part of the EAEU with Russia and Belarus, large-scale sanctions were inevitable for financing and the economy of Kazakhstan. On the other hand

---

<sup>61</sup> *Состоялся телефонный разговор Ван И с Сергеем Лавровым* [11 I 2022], [https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/wjwbz\\_673089/xghd\\_673097/202201/t20220111\\_10480831.shtml](https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/wjwbz_673089/xghd_673097/202201/t20220111_10480831.shtml) (13 V 2022).

<sup>62</sup> A. Libman, I. Davidzone, R. Saggat, *How to intervene symbolically: The CSTO in Kazakhstan* [27 VI 2023], <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2023/06/how-intervene-symbolically-csto-kazakhstan> (28 VI 2023).

<sup>63</sup> K. Auezova, *Russia’s Ukraine invasion is eroding Kremlin influence in Kazakhstan* [28 III 2023], <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/ukrainealert/russias-ukraine-invasion-is-eroding-kremlin-influence-in-kazakhstan/> (14 V 2023).

<sup>64</sup> A. Zanini, *Kazakhstan’s position in the war between Russia and Ukraine* [3 VI 2022], <https://nesa-center.org/kazakhstan-position-in-the-war-between-russia-and-ukraine/> (14 V 2023).

<sup>65</sup> M. Dumoulin, *Steppe change: How Russia’s war on Ukraine is reshaping Kazakhstan* [13 IV 2023], <https://ecfr.eu/publication/steppe-change-how-russias-war-on-ukraine-is-reshaping-kazakhstan/> (14 V 2023).

<sup>66</sup> *Глава государства провел встречу с общественностью Туркестанской области* [27 IX 2022], <https://www.akorda.kz/ru/glava-gosudarstva-provel-vstrechu-s-obshchestvennostyu-turkestanskoy-oblasti-2784832> (15 V 2023).

there is an issue of using Kazakhstan as a way to circumvent sanctions used by Russian and Belarusian companies, involving Kazakh businesses.

First aftershocks were felt on 8-11 III 2022, when big air-companies as Aeroflot and Air Astana halted flight connection between two countries. On 11 III there were held several consulting meetings between state authorities and representatives of US Department of State regarding sanctions adoption<sup>67</sup>. There was a discussion related to the effects of sanctions on Kazakhstan's economy. As further events unfold, it was affecting the banking sector, trading goods under sanctions and several other issues. The American side provided explanations for that matter.

There is precise attention to any announcements done by the Kazakhstan side, which are up to controversial interpretation in the media. For instance, right after consulting DoS, on 1 IV 2022 first deputy of the head of Tokayev administration T. Suleymenov made a statement „we will conform with sanctions. Regardless of our economical ties with Russia and Belarus, we have such ties internationally. Thus we want the least to receive secondary sanctions from US or EU”<sup>68</sup>. On 7 IV minister of foreign affairs has assured that they don't or join sanctions, however they won't avoid them with such quote „...in order to avert secondary sanctions and minimize their effects (Kazakhstan) won't make dedicated moves to circumvent sanctions”<sup>69</sup>. Sanction pressure increases and makes it harder to reformat or transform EAEU in any way. Such approach was firstly conceptualized by minister of foreign affairs of Kazakhstan, Mukhtar Tileuberdi<sup>70</sup>.

As further events showcased, further focus of EU and USA was in economic cooperation of Kazakhstan and Russia such as: transportation of goods, oil products and the banking sector. As a result, even in violating laws of EAEU, Russian and Belarusian transport companies with help from the state, has received support from Kazakhstan while circumventing sanctions<sup>71</sup>. Transporting Kazakhstan oil on foreign markets after limitations from the EU and Turkey was regulated by

---

<sup>67</sup> *О казахстанско-американских консультациях по санкционным вопросам* [11 III 2022], <https://www.gov.kz/memleket/entities/mfa/press/news/details/339775?lang=ru> (21 VI 2023).

<sup>68</sup> *Казахстан обещает не помогать России в обходе санкций* [1 IV 2022], <https://www.dw.com/ru/kazakhstan-ne-stanet-instrumentom-dlja-obhoda-sankcij-protiv-ru/a-61334694> (21 VI 2023).

<sup>69</sup> *Казахстан не намерен присоединяться к санкциям против России* [7 IV 2022], <https://kapital.kz/gosudarstvo/104416/kazakhstan-ne-nameren-prisoyedinyat-sya-k-sanktsiyam-protiv-rossii-mid.html> (21 VI 2023).

<sup>70</sup> *МИД Казахстана предлагает трансформировать ЕАЭС из-за наложенных на Россию санкций* [1 VI 2022], <https://www.currenttime.tv/a/31924834.html> (21 VI 2023).

<sup>71</sup> *Казахстан разрешил „переечку” грузов перевозчикам из России и Беларуси* [1 VI 2022], <https://kapital.kz/gosudarstvo/105939/kazakhstan-razreshil-peretsepku-gruzov-perevozchikam-iz-rossii-i-belarusi.html> (21 VI 2023).

the American administration, but haven't resolved yet<sup>72</sup>. Banking sector included such measures as trading off Russian assets (Alpha Bank and Sberbank) and re-registration of owners in favor of Kazakh quasistate companies<sup>73</sup>.

As of the end of 2022, it was becoming obvious that Kazakhstan was involved in massive circumvention of EU sanctions. Mostly it was about parallel import, supply of sanctioned goods with double usage<sup>74</sup>. Kazakhstan authorities want to show to European and American partners that they control state boundaries<sup>75</sup>. However, the threat of secondary sanctions remains against Kazakh companies.

Therefore war and sanctions have become defining factors in relations between Kazakhstan with Russia, USA and EU during 2022-2023. The Tokayev administration managed to balance out those connections, but risks of conflicts have increased.

In such conditions of such pressure and uncertainty, for Kazakhstan foreign policy, Chinese priority remains the most sustainable and developing. One of the major political events in Central Asia in 2023 was the summit „China – Central Asia” in Xian. This city is positioned as an important element of the „Belt – Road” initiative with Central Asian vectors. On the summit there were some agreements signed: Easements on visa regulations (visa free for 30 days), some agreements regarding gas and oil transit, wind energy production<sup>76</sup>. Building of general consular section and Kazakhstan logistic hub in Xian<sup>77</sup>.

On top of Russian military aggression and significant risk of getting under American or European sanctions because of EAEU, Chinese vector contrasts with its sustainability and success, creating conditions for increasing role of Beijing in Kazakh foreign policy.

Positive trend in relations with Uzbekistan continued in 2022-2023. Important milestone was ending talks related to the border with Uzbekistan, which formalized the Kazakhstan state border completely. On summit in December 2022

---

<sup>72</sup> *Turkey's Oil Tanker Backlog is Starting to Clear* [11 XII 2022], <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-12-11/turkey-oil-tanker-chaos-starts-to-clear-following-insurance-spat> (21 VI 2023).

<sup>73</sup> *СМИ: Сбербанк продает „дочку” в Казахстане государству* [16 V 2022], [https://tengrinews.kz/kazakhstan\\_news/smi-sberbank-prodaet-dochku-v-kazahstane-gosudarstvu-468132/](https://tengrinews.kz/kazakhstan_news/smi-sberbank-prodaet-dochku-v-kazahstane-gosudarstvu-468132/) (22 VI 2023).

<sup>74</sup> *„Риск очень велик”. Когда введут вторичные санкции против Казахстана и кто может стать их целью?* [29 V 2023], <https://rus.azattyq.org/a/32429235.html> (21 VI 2023).

<sup>75</sup> *Казахстан готов усилить проверку реэкспортируемых в Россию товаров* [22 III 2023], <https://russian.eurasianet.org/казахстан-готов-усилить-проверку-реэкспортируемых-в-Россию-товаров> (21 VI 2023).

<sup>76</sup> *Китай – Центральная Азия: итоги саммита в Сиане* [24 V 2023], <https://russian.eurasianet.org/китай-центральная-азия-итоги-саммита-в-сиане> (21 VI 2023).

<sup>77</sup> *Глава государства принял участие* [18 V 2023], <https://www.akorda.kz/ru/glava-gosudarstva-prinyal-uchastie-v-ceremonii-zapuska-stroitelstva-logisticheskogo-centra-kazahstana-v-suhom-portu-goroda-sian-1845539> (21 VI 2023).



agreement regarding demarcation of Kazakhstan-Uzbek state border<sup>78</sup>. Furthermore, underlining tight cooperation in all directions, Agreement on union relations was signed<sup>79</sup>. Such an agreement Kazakhstan had only with Russia. Thus relations between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan will be harmonized as relations with the Russian federation. If Uzbekistan is not part of CSTO or EAEU, does it mean it is getting „involved” into it for Uzbekistan? Or is it completely opposite?

In general, analysis of the tandem between Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan in context of war, sanctions and weakening Russia with growing China presence is attractive. Additionally Uzbekistan has had more tight relations with the USA ever since the American presence in Afghanistan, and its role in regulating post-conflict states. Now it is known that Uzbekistan has contacts with the government of the Taliban movement. Thus for Kazakhstan the regional dimension plays a more and more significant role, even with big players in the background. We see a new element in foreign policy under the Tokayev administration.

## Conclusion

Analysis of Kazakhstan Foreign policy in the modern period (2019-2023) is concentrated on dimensions that were taken by the Tokayev administration. Thus for Kazakhstan it is common that the role of president in foreign policy remains defining. It was necessary to underline differences between foreign political trends of Tokayev in contrast with Nazarbayev.

In general, Kazakhstan foreign policy is differentiated by succession principles, founded by former president Nazarbayev: nuclear disarmament, multivector cooperation in international, pragmatism, proactivism. All those principles are declared by Tokayev in all documents and announcements of president Tokayev.

During the time of power transit from March 2019 till January 2022, new elements in foreign policy were defined as: budget cuts on image international events, lagging eurasian integration. Tokayev was mostly concerned with internal policy. His powers in the beginning weren't allowing him to affect foreign and security policy. Institutional conditions were so that he wasn't able to affect it. In this place the chairman of the Security Council was put – former president Nazarbayev.

Power Transit ended with a social explosion in January 2022 and the full resignation of Nazarbayev from his position of chairman and ruler of Nur Atan. In

---

<sup>78</sup> *Договор о демаркации казахстанско-узбекской государственной границы* [22 XII 2022], [https://online.zakon.kz/Document/?doc\\_id=37544108](https://online.zakon.kz/Document/?doc_id=37544108) (13 V 2023).

<sup>79</sup> *Президенты Казахстана и Узбекистана провели переговоры в узком составе* [22 XII 2022], [https://online.zakon.kz/Document/?doc\\_id=37544108](https://online.zakon.kz/Document/?doc_id=37544108) (13 V 2023).

2023 there are more factors (both internal and external) that define Kazakhstan Foreign policy.

Internal factors: large scale protests of January 2022 and deficit of trust in authority, power struggle with Nazarbayev „clan”, continuation of socio-political reform.

External factors: war of Russian in Ukraine, sanctions.

As the result of these factors there are changes in foreign policy. Role of China is getting more stable and positive in the wake of risks related to Russia. However there are still issues: water management, Kazakh ethnic minority in Xinjiang, anti-chinese sentiment about economic invasion.

Relations with Russia, regardless of the deep dependency of Kazakhstan in political, military, infrastructural, social and economic spheres don't attract much enthusiasm among Kazakhstan elites and society. Risks of such relations increase.

Relations with the US and EU remain partnering, especially in economy, but risks of secondary sanctions have some pressure. Thus Kazakhstan tries to balance out relations between the US and Russia as much as possible.

With all listed factors, and deepening ties with Uzbekistan in the framework of regional cooperation, there are changes in political identity from eurasian to Central asian. In such a manner we see a departure from Russian influence.

## References

- Albert, E., *Kazakh President Tokayev Goes to Beijing* [12 V 2019], <https://thediplomat.com/2019/09/kazakh-president-tokayev-goes-to-beijing/>.
- Antikitajskie protesty i ugroza „masshtabnogo politicheskogo krizisa”* [4 IX 2019], <https://www.currenttime.tv/a/kazakhstan-china-protest/30146156.html>.
- Auyezova, K., *Russia s Ukraine invasion is eroding Kremlin influence in Kazakhstan* [28 III 2023], <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/ukrainealert/russias-ukraine-invasion-is-eroding-kremlin-influence-in-kazakhstan/>
- C5+1 Diplomatic Platform. U.S. Department of State* [27 II 2023], <https://www.state.gov/c51-diplomatic-platform/>.
- China says confident of Central Asia support before Pompeo visit* [31 XII 2019], <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-usa-xinjiang-idUSKBN1YZ0N3>.
- Demarkaciya gosudarstvennoj granicy Respubliki Kazahstan* [15 I 2020], <https://www.gov.kz/memleket/entities/kgk/press/article/details/2328?lang=ru>.
- Dogovor mezhdru Respublikoj Kazahstan i Rossijskoj Federaciej o dobrososedstve i sotrudnichestve v XXI veke* [11 XI 2014], [https://kazembassy.ru/rus/sotrudnichestvo/dvustoronnee\\_sotrudnichestvo/dogovornaya\\_baza/?cid=8](https://kazembassy.ru/rus/sotrudnichestvo/dvustoronnee_sotrudnichestvo/dogovornaya_baza/?cid=8).
- Dogovor o demarkacii kazahstansko-uzbekskej gosudarstvennoj granicy* [22 XII 2022], [https://online.zakon.kz/Document/?doc\\_id=37544108](https://online.zakon.kz/Document/?doc_id=37544108).

- Dogovory* [11 XI 2018], [https://kazembassy.ru/rus/sotrudnichestvo/dvustoronnee\\_sotrudnichestvo/dogovornaya\\_baza/?cid=8](https://kazembassy.ru/rus/sotrudnichestvo/dvustoronnee_sotrudnichestvo/dogovornaya_baza/?cid=8).
- Doklad OON: KNR neset odgovornost' za „ser'eznye narusheniya” prav cheloveka v provincii Sin'čzyan* [31 VIII 2022], <https://news.un.org/ru/story/2022/08/1430722>.
- Dumoulin, M., *Steppe change: How Russia's war on Ukraine is reshaping Kazakhstan* [13 IV 2023], <https://ecfr.eu/publication/steppe-change-how-russias-war-on-ukraine-is-reshaping-kazakhstan/>.
- Eks-glavu KNB Kazahstana Karima Masimova prigovorili k 18 godam lisheniya svobody po delu o gosizmene i zahvatu vlasti* [24 IV 2023], <https://www.currenttime.tv/a/prigovor-karimu-masimovu/32377165.html>.
- Glava gosudarstva Kasym-Zhomart Tokaev provel peregovory s Prezidentom Evropejskoj Komissii* [26 XI 2021], <https://www.akorda.kz/ru/glava-gosudarstva-kasym-zhomart-tokaev-provel-peregovory-s-prezidentom-evropejskoj-komissii-26105438>.
- Glava gosudarstva prinyal uchastie* [18 V 2023], <https://www.akorda.kz/ru/glava-gosudarstva-prinyal-uchastie-v-ceremonii-zapuska-stroitelstva-logisticheskogo-centra-kazahstana-v-suhom-portu-goroda-sian-1845539>.
- Glava gosudarstva provel vstrechu s obshchestvennost'yu Turkestanskoy oblasti* [27 IX 2022], <https://www.akorda.kz/ru/glava-gosudarstva-provel-vstrechu-s-obshchestvennostyu-turkestanskoy-oblasti-2784832>.
- Itogi nacional'noj perepisi naseleniya 2009 g* [11 X 2011], <https://stat.gov.kz/ru/national/2009/general/>.
- Kazahi za granicej: skol'ko ih naschityvaetsya i v kakih stranah oni zhivut?* [17 VIII 2009], [https://online.zakon.kz/Document/?doc\\_id=30458632&pos=4;-98#pos=4;-98](https://online.zakon.kz/Document/?doc_id=30458632&pos=4;-98#pos=4;-98).
- Kazahstan gotov usilit' proverku reeksportiruemyh v Rossiyu tovarov* [22 III 2023], <https://russian.eurasianet.org/казахстан-готов-усилить-проверку-реэкспортируемых-в-Россию-товаров>.
- Kazahstan i Kitaj gotovyat Soglashenie po vododeleniyu* [17 VI 2022], [https://www.inform.kz/ru/kazahstan-i-kitaj-gotovyat-soglasheniya-po-vododeleniyu\\_a3945559](https://www.inform.kz/ru/kazahstan-i-kitaj-gotovyat-soglasheniya-po-vododeleniyu_a3945559).
- Kazahstan ne nameren prisoedinyat'sya k sankciyam protiv Rossii* [7 IV 2022], <https://kapital.kz/gosudarstvo/104416/kazahstan-ne-nameren-prisoyedinyat-sya-k-sanktsiyam-protiv-rossii-mid.html>.
- Kazahstan obeshchaet ne pomogat' Rossii v obhode sankcij* [1 IV 2022], <https://www.dw.com/ru/kazahstan-ne-stanet-instrumentom-dlja-obhoda-sankcij-protiv-rf/a-61334694>.
- Kazahstan razreshil „perecepku” gruzov perevozchikam iz Rossii i Belarusi* [1 VI 2022], <https://kapital.kz/gosudarstvo/105939/kazahstan-razreshil-peretsepku-gruzov-perevozchikam-iz-rossii-i-belarusi.html>.

- Kazahstanskije zheleznyje dorogi – zheleznyaya doroga* [18 V 2020], <https://mikeleloconte.ru/kazahstanskije-zheleznyje-dorogi---zheleznyaya-doroga/>.
- Kazahstan: zhertvy yanvarskih protestov ne nahodyat pravosudiya* [9 V 2022], <https://www.hrw.org/ru/news/2022/05/09/kazakhstan-no-justice-january-protest-victims>.
- Kitaj – Central'naya Aziya: itogi sammita v Siane* [24 V 2023], <https://russian.eurasianet.org/китай-центральная-азия-итоги-саммита-в-сиане>.
- Lavrov ukazal na stremlenie SShA zloupotrebit' formatom „S5+1” v Central'noj Azii* [15 I 2018], <https://tass.ru/politika/4874195>.
- Lavrov zayavil, chto SShA pytayutsya oslabit' svyazi Rossii so stranami Central'noj Azii* [2 IV 2021], <https://www.asiaplustj.info/ru/news/tajikistan/politics/20210402/lavrov-zayavil-chto-ssha-pitayutsya-oslabit-svyazi-rossii-so-stranami-tsentralnoi-azii>.
- Libman, A., Davidzone, I. & Saggat, R., *How to intervene symbolically: The CSTO in Kazakhstan* [27 VI 2023], <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2023/06/how-intervene-symbolically-csto-kazakhstan>.
- MID Kazahstana predlagaet transformirovat' EAES iz-za nalozhennyh na Rossiyu sankcij* [1 VI 2022], <https://www.currenttime.tv/a/31924834.html> (21 VI 2023).
- Ob'em vzaimnoj trgovli mezhdru Kazahstanom i Kitaem b'et istoricheskie rekordy*, [20 I 2020], <https://www.gov.kz/memleket/entities/mfa-beijing/press/news/details/492232?lang=ru>.
- Ob ispolnenii polnomochij Prezidenta Respubliki Kazahstan* [19 III 2019], [https://www.akorda.kz/ru/legal\\_acts/decrees/ob-ispolnenii-polnomochii-prezidenta-respubliki-kazahstan](https://www.akorda.kz/ru/legal_acts/decrees/ob-ispolnenii-polnomochii-prezidenta-respubliki-kazahstan).
- Obsuzhdenie situacii v Respublike Kazahstan i mery po normalizacii obstanovki v strane* [10 I 2022], [https://odkb-csto.org/news/news\\_odkb/10-yanvar-ya-v-formate-videokonferentsii-sostoitsya-zasedanie-soveta-kollektivnoy-bezopasnosti-odkb-p/?clear\\_cache=Y%23loaded#loaded](https://odkb-csto.org/news/news_odkb/10-yanvar-ya-v-formate-videokonferentsii-sostoitsya-zasedanie-soveta-kollektivnoy-bezopasnosti-odkb-p/?clear_cache=Y%23loaded#loaded) (13 V 2023).
- Ob utverzhdenii Gosudarstvennoj programmy infrastruktornogo razvitiya „Nurly zhol” na 2020-2025 gg. 31 dekabrya 2019* [30 XII 2022], <https://adilet.zan.kz/rus/docs/P1900001055>.
- Oficial'nyj portret Prezidenta Respubliki Kazahstan Kasym-Zhomarta Kemelevicha Tokaeva* [30 XI 2022], <https://www.akorda.kz/ru/president/president>.
- O kazahstansko-amerikanskih konsul'taciyah po sankcionnym voprosam* [11 III 2022], <https://www.gov.kz/memleket/entities/mfa/press/news/details/339775?lang=ru>.
- O Konceptcii vneshnej politiki RK na 2014-2020 gg.* [9 III 2020], [https://www.akorda.kz/ru/legal\\_acts/decrees/o-konceptcii-vneshnei-politiki-respubliki-kazahstan-na-2020-2030-gody](https://www.akorda.kz/ru/legal_acts/decrees/o-konceptcii-vneshnei-politiki-respubliki-kazahstan-na-2020-2030-gody).
- O Konceptcii vneshnej politiki RK na 2014-2020 gg.* [21 I 2014], <https://adilet.zan.kz/rus/docs/U1400000741>.

- O merah po realizacii predvybornoj programmy Prezidenta RK „Blagopoluchie dlya vsekh! Preemstvennost’. Spravedlivost’. Progress”* [19 VI 2019], <https://adilet.zan.kz/rus/docs/U190000027U#z10>.
- Oshikbaev, R., Zhakypova, F., Isaev, B. & Kolesnik, K., *Ocenka vospriyatiya Kitaya v kazhastanskom obshchestve: mify i real’nost’* [2 II 2021], [https://ca-c.org.ru/journal/2021/journal\\_rus/cac-02/02.shtml](https://ca-c.org.ru/journal/2021/journal_rus/cac-02/02.shtml).
- Paramonov, V., Stokov, A. & Abduganieva, Z., *Vliyanie Evropejskogo Soyuza na Central’nyu Aziyu: obzor, analiz, prognoz*, Almaty 2017.
- Pervaya Konsul’tativnaya vstrecha glav gosudarstv Central’noj Azii* [15 III 2018], <https://uza.uz/ru/posts/pervaya-konsultativnaya-vstrecha-glav-gosudarstv-tsentralnoy-15-03-2018>.
- Polozhenie etnicheskikh kazahov v Kitae prokomentirovali v MID* [31 V 2021] [https://www.kt.kz/rus/politics/polozhenie\\_eticheskikh\\_kazahov\\_v\\_kitae\\_prokomentirovali\\_v\\_mid\\_1377913652.html](https://www.kt.kz/rus/politics/polozhenie_eticheskikh_kazahov_v_kitae_prokomentirovali_v_mid_1377913652.html).
- Poslanie Glavy gosudarstva Kasym-Zhomarta Tokaeva narodu Kazahstana* [2 IX 2019], [https://www.akorda.kz/ru/addresses/addresses\\_of\\_president/poslanie-glavy-gosudarstva-kasym-zhomarta-tokaeva-narodu-kazahstana](https://www.akorda.kz/ru/addresses/addresses_of_president/poslanie-glavy-gosudarstva-kasym-zhomarta-tokaeva-narodu-kazahstana).
- Prezidenty Kazahstana i Uzbekistana proveli peregovory v uzkom sostave* [22 XII 2022], [https://online.zakon.kz/Document/?doc\\_id=37544108](https://online.zakon.kz/Document/?doc_id=37544108).
- Rasporyazhenie Prezidenta RK ot 25.05.2020 „O merah po sokrashcheniyu ras-khodov v central’nyh, mestnyh, gosudarstvennyh organah i sub”ektah kvazi-gosudarstvennogo sektora”* [25 V 2020], <https://adilet.zan.kz/rus/docs/N2000000108>.
- „Risk ochen’ velik”. Kogda vvedut vtorichnye sankcii protiv Kazahstana i kto mozhet stat’ ih cel’yu?* [29 V 2023], <https://rus.azattyq.org/a/32429235.html>.
- Sanches, W.A., *A Rising Global Player: Kazakhstan’s Foreign Policy in the 2020s*, [V 2020], [https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/media/uploads/documents/KI\\_200514\\_cable%2051\\_v1.pdf](https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/media/uploads/documents/KI_200514_cable%2051_v1.pdf).
- SMI: Sberbank prodaet „dochku” v Kazahstane gosudarstvu* [16 V 2022], [https://tengrinews.kz/kazahstan\\_news/smi-sberbank-prodaet-dochku-v-kazahstane-gosudarstvu-468132/](https://tengrinews.kz/kazahstan_news/smi-sberbank-prodaet-dochku-v-kazahstane-gosudarstvu-468132/).
- Sostoyalsya telefonnyj razgovor Van I s Sergeem Lavrovym* [11 I 2022], [https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/wjzb\\_673089/xghd\\_673097/202201/t20220111\\_10480831.shtml](https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/wjzb_673089/xghd_673097/202201/t20220111_10480831.shtml).
- Sotrudnichestvo Respubliki Kazahstan s Soedinennymi Shtatami Ameriki* [8 X 2019], <https://www.gov.kz/memleket/entities/mfa/press/article/details/531?lang=ru>.
- Sotrudnichestvo Uzbekistana i Kazahstana na sovremennom etape razvitiya* [4 XII 2021], <https://www.uzdaily.uz/ru/post/65720>.
- Spisok lic, pogibshih vo vremya yanvarskih sobytij* [16 VIII 2022], <https://www.gov.kz/memleket/entities/prokuror/press/news/details/413195?lang=ru>.

- Tavrovskij, Y., *Shelkovyj put' obryvaetsya v Rossii* [12 V 2017], [https://www.ng.ru/kartblansh/2017-05-12/3\\_6986\\_kartblansh.html](https://www.ng.ru/kartblansh/2017-05-12/3_6986_kartblansh.html).
- The New Great Game in Asia* [2 I 1996], <https://www.nytimes.com/1996/01/02/opinion/the-new-great-game-in-asia.html>.
- The United States imports most of the uranium it uses as fuel. U.S. Energy Information Administration* [7 VII 2021], <https://www.eia.gov/energyexplained/nuclear/where-our-uranium-comes-from.php>.
- Tokaev ne prinyal proekt strategii i razvitiya EAES* [19 V 2020], [https://forbes.kz/process/tokaev\\_ne\\_prinyal\\_proekt\\_strategii\\_razvitiya\\_eaes](https://forbes.kz/process/tokaev_ne_prinyal_proekt_strategii_razvitiya_eaes).
- Tokaev poka ne trogaet samyh glavnyh. Dosym Satpaev ob arestah rodstvennikov Nazarbaeva i o tekh, kto ishchet sebe novogo hozyaina* [2 V 2022], <https://rus.azattyq.org/a/kazakhstan-political-scientist-on-the-arrests-of-nazarbaevs-relatives/31829125.html>.
- Torgovlya mezhdru Rossiej i Kazahstanom v 2019 g* [12 II 2020], <https://russian-trade.com/reports-and-reviews/2022-02/torgovlya-mezhdru-rossiey-i-kazahstanom-v-2021-g/>.
- Torgovlya Rossii i Kazahstana v 2021* [12 II 2022], <https://russian-trade.com/reports-and-reviews/2022-02/torgovlya-mezhdru-rossiey-i-kazahstanom-v-2021-g/>.
- Torgovo-ekonomicheskie otnosheniya. ES i Kazahstan* [3 VIII 2021], [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/kazakhstan/evropeyskiy-soyuz-i-kazahstan\\_ru?s=222](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/kazakhstan/evropeyskiy-soyuz-i-kazahstan_ru?s=222).
- Transportirovka nefi. Godovoj otchet 2020. Kazmunajgaz* [2 II 2021], <https://ar2020.kmg.kz/ru/strategic-report/operating/oil-transportation>.
- Turarbekava, R.M., *Eurasian integration: from post-Soviet to New Regional Projects* [22 XI 2019], <https://www.kent.ac.uk/politics/rs-gcrf-compass/Turarbekova-2474-Article-Text-16305-1-18-20191220-1.pdf>.
- Turarbekova, R., Semak, E. & Dovgan, E., *Evrazijskij ekonomicheskij soyuz: integraciya mezhdru ideal'nym i real'nym* [2 XI 2017], [http://minskdialogue.by/research/reports/evraziiskii-ekonomicheskii-soiuz-integracii-a-mezhdru-idealnym-i-realnym\\_](http://minskdialogue.by/research/reports/evraziiskii-ekonomicheskii-soiuz-integracii-a-mezhdru-idealnym-i-realnym_).
- Turkey's Oil Tanker Backlog is Starting to Clear* [11 XII 2022], <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-12-11/turkey-oil-tanker-chaos-starts-to-clear-following-insurance-spat>.
- Ukaz Prezidenta RK „O Koncepcii vneshnej politiki Respubliki Kazahstan na 2014-2020 gg.”* [21 I 2014], <https://adilet.zan.kz/rus/docs/U1400000741>.
- U.S. Has Question About Kazakhstan's Request For CSTO Troops* [8 I 2022], <https://www.rferl.org/a/blinken-questions-kazakhstan-csto-troops/31644821.html>.
- V 2019 ob'em torgovli mezhdru Kitaem i Kazahstanom uvelichilsya na 10,3 proc., Sin'hua Novosti* [23 III 2020], [http://russian.news.cn/2020-03/23/c\\_138907529.htm](http://russian.news.cn/2020-03/23/c_138907529.htm).

- Voennye poligony. Skol'ko zemli i za kakuyu platu arenduet Rossiya v Kazahstane* [22 V 2023], [https://tengrinews.kz/kazakhstan\\_news/voennye-poligonyi-skolko-zemli-za-kakuyu-platu-arenduet-499280/](https://tengrinews.kz/kazakhstan_news/voennye-poligonyi-skolko-zemli-za-kakuyu-platu-arenduet-499280/).
- Zakon Respubliki Kazahstan „O Sovete Bezopasnosti Respubliki Kazahstan”* [5 VI 2018], <https://adilet.zan.kz/rus/docs/Z1800000178>.
- Zakon Respubliki Kazahstan „O vnesenii izmenenij v nekotorye zakonodatel'nye akty Respubliki Kazahstan”* [7 II 2023], <https://adilet.zan.kz/rus/docs/Z2200000106#z14>.
- Zanini, A., *Kazakhstan's position in the war between Russia and Ukraine* [3 VI 2022], <https://nesa-center.org/kazakhstans-position-in-the-war-between-russia-and-ukraine/>.
- Zemlya – narodu. Massovye protesty vynudili prezidenta Kazahstana ustanovit'sya reformu* [5 V 2016], <https://fergananews.com/news/24706>.

## Abstrakt

Roza Turarbekava

### Polityka zagraniczna Kazachstanu w okresie prezydentury Kasyma-Żomarta Tokajewa (2019-2023)

W artykule zbadano zmiany w polityce zagranicznej Kazachstanu w okresie przejściowym przekazania władzy przez N. Nazarbajewa na rzecz K. Tokajewa. Analizując zmiany zidentyfikowano czynniki wewnętrzne i zewnętrzne polityki zagranicznej, scharakteryzowano relacje z partnerami priorytetowymi, takimi jak: Chiny, Rosja, USA i kraje Azji Centralnej, a także zmiany w postrzeganiu swojej polityki zagranicznej poprzez analizę dokumentów koncepcyjnych. Zidentyfikowano najważniejsze czynniki wewnętrzne: covid-19, protesty w 2022 r., zmiany w konstrukcji instytucjonalnej systemu politycznego. Zidentyfikowano następujące determinujące czynniki zewnętrzne: wojnę Rosji na Ukrainie, sankcje wobec sojuszników Kazachstanu (Rosja i Białoruś), rywalizację dużych aktorów. Podsumowując, wyciągnięto wnioski, że rola Chin w polityce zagranicznej Kazachstanu odgrywa coraz bardziej stabilizującą rolę, w przeciwieństwie do Rosji i Stanów Zjednoczonych, których rywalizacja stanowi czynnik ryzyka.

**Słowa kluczowe:** transformacja, polityka zagraniczna, Kazachstan, protesty, wojna

**Roza Turarbekava** – dr historii, stypendystka Niemieckiej Centrali Wymiany Akademickiej w Centrum Badań Europy Wschodniej Uniwersytetu Justusa Liebiga w Giessen (RFN). ORCID: 0000-0002-9679-2713