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Layout:

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Address:

Kazakhstan Institute
for Strategic Studies under the President
of the Republic of Kazakhstan
4, Beybitshilik St.
Nur-Sultan, 010000, Republic of Kazakhstan

Phone: (7172) 75 20 20

Fax: (7172) 75 20 21

E-mail: office@kisi.kz

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жанындағы Қазақстан стратегиялық
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Телефон: (7172) 75 20 20

Факс: (7172) 75 20 21

E-mail: office@kisi.kz

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Алмас Арзикулов
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Адрес:
Казахстанский институт стратегических
исследований при Президенте
Республики Казахстан
010000, Республика Казахстан, Нур-Султан
ул. Бейбитшилик 4
Телефон: (7172) 75 20 20
Факс: (7172) 75 20 21
E-mail: office@kisi.kz
www.kisi.kz

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GENESIS AND EVOLUTION OF THE U.S.-KAZAKHSTANI RELATIONS IN 1990S

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Andrey Shenin*

Head of the Research Department,
Narxoz University, Ph.D.
(Almaty, Kazakhstan)

Aigerim Raimzhanova**

Deputy vice-rector for academic affairs,
Narxoz University, Ph.D.
(Almaty, Kazakhstan)

Abstract. The article traces the chronology of the political interactions between the U.S. and Kazakhstan in the 1990s. Utilizing factual information and official sources the authors assess the genesis and evolution of the relationship between two countries. The basis for the development of bilateral cooperation was nuclear disarmament and extensive cooperation in the energy sphere. Despite political obstacles in the interaction between countries in the late 1990s the U.S. always held Kazakhstan in high regard as a gateway into the Central Asian region. Likewise, Kazakhstan continues to perceive Washington as one of the most important extraregional power that supports its economic development and helps keep the geopolitical balance.

Key words: *United States, Kazakhstan, Clinton, Nunn-Lugar Program, Nuclear Disarmament.*

1990-жж. АМЕРИКА-ҚАЗАҚСТАН ҚАТЫНАСТАРЫНЫҢ ГЕНЕЗИСІ МЕН ЭВОЛЮЦИЯСЫ

Андрей Шенин, Әйгерім Раимжанова

Аңдатпа. Бұл мақалада Америка Құрама Штаттары мен Қазақстан Республикасы арасындағы 1990-шы жылдардағы саяси қарым-қатынастарға мол фактілік материалдар мен ресми деректер негізінде егжей-тегжейлі шолу ұсынылады. Екіжақты

* andrey.shenin@narxoz.kz

** aigerim.raimzhanova@narxoz.kz

ынтымақтастықты қалыптастырудың негізі ядролық қарусыздану және энергетика саласын дамыту болды. 1990 жылдардың екінші жартысында туындаған саяси келіспеушіліктерге қарамастан, АҚШ Қазақстанды Орталық Азиядағы стратегиялық әріптес ретінде қарастырды. Астана (қазіргі Нұр-Сұлтан) өз кезегінде Вашингтонды елдің экономикалық дамуына инвестиция салатын және аймақтағы геосаяси тепе-теңдікті сақтайтын ең ықпалды сыртқы күштердің бірі ретінде қарастырды.

Түйін сөздер: АҚШ, Қазақстан, Клинтон, Нанн-Лугар бағдарламасы, ядролық қарусыздану.

ГЕНЕЗИС И ЭВОЛЮЦИЯ АМЕРИКАНО-КАЗАХСТАНСКИХ ОТНОШЕНИЙ В 1990-х гг.

Андрей Шенин, Айгерим Раимжанова

Аннотация. В данной статье предлагается подробный обзор политических взаимоотношений между Соединенными Штатами Америки и Республикой Казахстан в 1990-х гг. на основе богатого фактического материала и официальных данных. Исследование демонстрирует, что фундаментом для формирования двустороннего сотрудничества были вопросы ядерного разоружения и развития энергетической сферы. Далее, несмотря на возникшие во второй половине 1990х гг. некоторые политические разногласия, США по-прежнему рассматривали Казахстан в качестве стратегического партнера в Центральной Азии. Астана (ныне – Нур-Султан), в свою очередь, рассматривала Вашингтон в качестве одной из наиболее влиятельных внешних сил, которая при этом инвестирует в экономическое развитие страны и поддерживает геополитический баланс в регионе.

Ключевые слова: США, Казахстан, Клинтон, программа Нанна-Лугара, ядерное разоружение.

Introduction

In 2021, Kazakhstan will celebrate 30 years of independence. The country has come a long way in the process of building a modern and progressive state in the aftermath of the fall of the Soviet Union.

In the beginning of the 1990s the situation in the country was looking very difficult for the new leadership: destruction of stable economic relations, deficit of goods, new reality of international system, difficult economic conditions, ambiguous future of the Soviet nuclear heritage, among others. Still, the country possessed not only the world's fourth strongest nuclear potential, but also rich energy resources, skilled population,

vast territory, and a convenient geographical location. These obvious advantages were noticed by the USA – a superpower that had emerged victorious from the Cold War.

Washington has quickly assessed Kazakhstan's capabilities and began to develop active bilateral cooperation. The U.S. initially focused on two areas: elimination of Soviet nuclear legacy to prevent leakage of technology, researchers and materials in the direction of “untrustworthy countries” (North Korea, Iran), and the development of Kazakhstan's energy structures. Through joint initiatives, the countries have laid a solid foundation for bilateral relations.

This paper provides an analysis

of Kazakhstan-U.S. political relations from 1991 to 2000. While numerous publications take on this issue, the particular contribution of this article is a step-by-step assessment of the relationship-building process, which contains numerous implications and significant insights for the evaluation of cooperation dynamics. The focal point of the analysis are the specific agreements, participants and outcomes of the joint initiatives.

Literature review

The research is based primarily on official American and Kazakhstani documents. Numerous legal documents, memoranda and archival documents highlight key areas of bilateral cooperation, terms of the partnership and anticipated outcomes. The presidents' speeches, government and ministerial resolutions, statements by diplomats, and legislative acts of both countries are insightful as well. The individual agency materials are also worth noting, such as the "The Political Environment of Kazakhstan in the Post-Soviet Era" from the U.S. Department of Justice, for instance; it clearly reveals that back in 1994 American experts already had a fairly good understanding of the internal processes of Kazakhstan [1].

Similarly, it is important to mention a range of documents dedicated to the implementation of the "Cooperative Threat Reduction" or "Nunn-Lugar Program" for the processing and elimination of the nuclear legacy of the Soviet Union in the territories of former Soviet republics (Russia, Kazakhstan, Belarus, and Ukraine), namely the Lisbon Protocol of 1992 and the Budapest Memorandum of 1994 [2].

In the framework of the bilateral agreements it is worth mentioning the documents related to cooperation with the U.S. government (i.e. the 1992 Agreement on Trade Relations between the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Government of the United States, or the 1994 Agreement on

the Purchase of Highly Enriched Uranium) and the cooperation with individual US multinational corporations: Chevron, J. P. Morgan, and Halliburton Company.

Notably, there are not many extensive studies devoted to a comprehensive study of U.S.-Kazakhstan relations. In 2020, Kazakhstan Institute for Strategic Studies under the President of Kazakhstan published E. Tukumov's monograph "Discovering America: A View from Kazakhstan", which is primarily related to the study of U.S. history rather than bilateral relations [3]. Shaymardanov's thesis research titled "Kazakhstani-American Relations in the Process of Becoming Sovereign of the Republic of Kazakhstan" was useful for the initial research phase but was constrained by time framework as it was published back in 1993 [4]. Separate provisions related to the Kazakhstani-American relations are included in Tursunbaev's doctoral dissertation titled "International Cooperation of the Republic of Kazakhstan in the 1990s", but they assess separate aspects of cooperation, without a comprehensive study [5].

The historian and political scientist Martha Brill Olcott stands out among researchers in the field - she published the "The Kazakhs" book back in the USSR period, and since then has published numerous articles on Kazakhstan and its geopolitical role in the world [6]. The work of Togzhan Kassenova of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace on disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and materials was similarly insightful. For instance, her publications "Banning Nuclear Testing: Lessons from the Semipalatinsk Nuclear Testing Site" and "Kazakhstan and the Global Nuclear Order" highlight important aspects of the U.S.-Kazakhstan nuclear cooperation from the 1990s period to present [7,8].

Of particular value to researching this article was the book written by Pulitzer Prize

winner David Hoffman, “The Dead Hand: The Untold Story of the Cold War”, dedicated to the study of the Nunn-Lugar programme [9].

The question of U.S. foreign policy in Kazakhstan and Central Asia attracts great attention from Kazakhstani researchers. The various aspects of bilateral relationships were analyzed by various authors including Hisham H., Kydyrbekuly D.B., Tulepbayev R.M., Tulepbergenov G.K., Alimov S.M., Aldubashev Zh.M., Kakenova Z.A. [10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16]. The authors take on the issue from different aspects, including security issues, energy relations, nuclear disarmament, trade and democratic developments. The distinct feature of the current paper is the formation of short but comprehensive review of bilateral relationship from various pillars, excluding energy that represents a separate study on its own between the United States and Kazakhstan in the 1990s, the period that formed a foundation for the relationship between countries and Kazakhstan’s further positioning of the world arena.

With regard to energy relations, numerous American experts have analysed the various aspects of the U.S.-Kazakhstani partnership. For example, Forsyth looked at the politics of oil in the Caucasus and Central Asia, with a specific focus on oil exploration and export in the Caspian basin [17]. The expert of the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) Cordesman studied the narrative of the U.S. Administration related to the implementation of the different energy initiatives in the Caspian Sea region [18]. The works by Blank, Jaffe, Starr and other American experts are also utilized in the article [19, 20, 21].

Another valuable source of information was presented the U.S. Congress hearings, which highlighted the various aspects of American-Kazakhstani relations. For instance, in 1998 the U.S. House of Representatives held a

hearing titled “Hearing on US interests in the Central Asian republics” [22]. Various state policies, such as the Talbott Doctrine promulgated by Deputy Secretary of State Talbott in 1997 with regard to democratic reforms in Central Asian states, also belong into this category [23].

Numerous sources that present significant information on the various aspects of the U.S.-Kazakhstan relations can be found in Russian language. Among significant ones are the works of Kazakhstani expert Laumulin “U.S. Central Asian Policy under the presidency of Barack Obama”, Russian expert of the Moscow State Institute of International Relations Kazantsev “U.S. Policy in Post-Soviet Central Asia: Character and Prospects”, works of historian Troitsky “U.S.-Kazakhstan relations in the energy sphere (1992-2007)”, Popov’s “Russian Center for Strategic Studies”, among others [24, 25, 26, 27]. The authors of this paper also utilized materials from Kazakhstani, American, European and Russian newspapers, such as “Kazakhstanskaya Pravda”, “New-York Times”, “Izvestiya”, and other publications.

Statistical data was obtained from official national and international sources published by the Statistics Agency of Kazakhstan, the National Bank of Kazakhstan, UN agencies and the U.S. Government, the World Bank, departments of US TNCs and other agencies.

Methodology

This paper bases its research on secondary sources utilizing historical method. This means that authors analyzed the evolution of bilateral relations on a year-to-year basis. Both qualitative and quantitative data is assessed. Case-method is also used as authors focus on two specific countries for analysis. Various secondary sources are used, including archival documents, memoranda, agreements, official state reports, interviews, and statistical data that are relevant for assessing the evolution

of U.S.-Kazakhstan relation during the period of 1990s. The paper also accumulates data from business and international public organizations, think-tanks, media reports, as well as scholarly publications of Kazakhstani and international experts. The usage of wide range of sources is accumulated to provide a broad perspective on the subject.

Genesis and evolution of the U.S.-Kazakhstan relations in 1991-1996

After the brief euphoria related to the fall of the Soviet Union, Washington suddenly realised the full range of challenges that the U.S. would face as the world's only superpower and global leader. One of the key issues that required close attention was the Central Asian region, both due to attractive hydrocarbon reserves and the nuclear weapon inheritance that was passed on to Kazakhstan. Washington's concern was related to the fact that Kazakhstan possessed 18 percent of the USSR's nuclear legacy, effectively becoming the fourth most powerful arsenal in the world, which, combined together with its Muslim population and vast hydrocarbon reserves, could turn the country into a real threat to the United States. The term "Islamic atom bomb" was often used in the reports of American analysts in the early 1990s. It was suggested that Muslim identity could become the potential basis of a rapprochement between the Central Asian countries and Iran, which had begun an active regional religious expansion. Although later it became clear, however, that the decades of propaganda for atheism in Kazakhstan - a legacy of the USSR - had radically affected the thinking and worldview of the republics' inhabitants, the fears of American experts were justified at the time.

The U.S. has prioritized building a strong relationship with Kazakhstan, leaving other Central Asian republics in the region 'for later'. In the framework of the new Great Game

theory it made sense to focus on Kazakhstan to balance the impact of other countries. Kazakhstan, in turn, was following a 'multi-vector' strategy and actively seeking partners on the world stage to bring investments and technology to the national oil and gas sector. A key point of cooperation with the U.S. was also related to the dismantling of the Soviet nuclear complex that required large maintenance costs and posed environmental issues.

The development of U.S.-Kazakhstan relations got off to a fairly dynamic start. On December 16, 1991 Kazakhstan became an independent state and on January 14 the head of state Nursultan Nazarbayev received the United States' Undersecretary of State for Economic Affairs Fauver with whom he discussed the development of direct bilateral economic relations and the establishment of most favourable trade and tax regime for Kazakhstan. On January 17, the President of Kazakhstan met with the U.S. Ambassador to the CIS Straus and a week later a delegation from the State Department led by First Undersecretary of State Bartholomew arrived in Kazakhstan. On February 3, the U.S. Embassy - the very first foreign embassy in the country - was opened in Almaty. This signalled a strong commitment to cooperation.

Security and arms control comprised focus of these meetings and negotiations. The first step to the establishment of security was the discussion of a unified control of ex-Soviet nuclear arms in the framework of CIS agreement, although the latter did not discuss the issue of ownership of these arms. Therefore, President Nazarbayev, using all possible levers to raise the prestige of the country, in an interview to the U.S. Christian Science Monitor declared the intermediate position of Kazakhstan on elimination of nuclear weapons as a "nuclear state choosing a path of disarmament" [28]. However, in order to avoid an open conflict with Russia

and the United States during his visit to Washington, D.C. to meet Secretary of State John Baker and President Bush from May 17 to 23, the president of Kazakhstan reaffirmed the country's commitment to accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) [29].

Another significant aspect of the negotiations during Nazarbayev's visit on May 19, 1992 to the United States was the signing of the founding agreement between Kazakhstan and the American oil corporation Chevron to establish the Tengizchevronoil venture, aimed at the joint American-Kazakhstani development of the Tengiz oil and gas field. The very next day on May 20 a Memorandum between the Republic of Kazakhstan and the J.P. Morgan was signed; the document reflected the corporation's significant role as a financial consultant to the government on the Tengiz project [30].

To create favourable economic conditions for trade between the Republic of Kazakhstan and the United States, an agreement on capital investment support that outlined the principles of insurance, investment and lending was signed [31], as well as the memorandum of understanding between the countries [32], among others. Following the meeting with Nazarbayev President Bush declared "the beginning of a new relationship" between the two countries, in which the U.S. would provide Kazakhstan full support in its transition to a market economy [33]. The country began to follow the Washington Consensus guidelines in the economy reforms.

In support of the non-proliferation agenda in May 1992 in Lisbon the foreign ministers of Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan and Ukraine, together with the U.S. Secretary of State, signed an additional protocol to the US-Soviet START-1 Treaty that signified the commitment of Belarus, Ukraine, and Kazakhstan to join the NPT as non-nuclear

weapon states. Kazakhstan's Supreme Court ratified the document on July 7, 1992.

On the whole, in the period between 1991 and 1992, the United States was fairly successful in achieving its initial goals: Kazakhstan actively pursued the implementation of the terms of the START I Treaty, while the economic expansion launched by Chevron gradually brought the state into the sphere of Washington's global interests. In both areas multinational companies and high-level state officials were actively involved. In 1992 alone Kazakhstan was visited by Senators S. Nunn, R. Lugar and J. Cranston, former President J. Carter, USAID Deputy Director L. Crensdall, a senior official from the U.S. Defense Department L. Libby, Vice President of General Motors G. Deyonkez, and others. In the end of 1992 Kazakhstan signed an agreement with the United States related to the activities of the Peace Corps on the territory - an independent federal agency of the U.S. Government that sends volunteers for provision of humanitarian assistance to the countries in need [34].

Toward the end of 1992, President Nazarbayev visited the United States again. The purpose of the visit was to address the 47th session of the UN General Assembly and deliver a message to the world regarding security issues of Kazakhstan and the consequences of nuclear tests at the Semipalatinsk test site. It had already been closed at that time but ramifications of 456 nuclear tests were enormous and had a negative impact on the health of more than a million people [35]; hence, Nazarbayev proposed cooperation of Asian countries to address urgent issues under the auspices of a new organization, the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA) [36]. Hence, already in the initial stage of its independence Kazakhstan has demonstrated readiness for conducting dialogue with the international community on a wide range of issues.

The year of 1993 was dedicated to discussions of security issues and the disposal of nuclear weapons. On February 18 the leader of Kazakhstan met with an Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassador of the United States to the Republic of Kazakhstan W. Courtney, where he confirmed his obligations under START I and the Lisbon Protocol, and also stressed the need for security guarantees and financial, technical support for the dismantlement and elimination of nuclear weapons. In particular, personnel was required as toward the end of 1993 nearly 70 percent of the Russian officers working in Kazakhstan (including those at nuclear facilities) had requested Russian citizenship and intended to return home [37]. At that time Russian servicemen accounted for about 80% of the officer corps, while the proportion of Kazakhstani servicemen did not exceed 10% [38].

On June 8-9, 1993 a large delegation of U.S. officials and businessmen arrived in Almaty to agree on support mechanisms. The first group, headed by Ambassador-at-Large Strobe Talbott, discussed security and disarmament issues under the NPT and START I agreements (it was common knowledge that the United States had allocated around \$800 million for the CIS disarmament and nuclear weapons disposition program). The second group, led by senior USAID officials B. Atwood and M. Butler, discussed economic, technical and humanitarian cooperation with Kazakhstan. President Nazarbayev has prepared a large package of proposals aimed at expanding economic cooperation between two countries to increase the U.S. investment in the country's economy. Two months later, on September 12, Talbott and the Ambassador J. Goodby met with President Nazarbayev to discuss outlined economic proposals and determine a joint strategy for nuclear disarmament.

The series of meetings in 1993 concluded with a delegation visit led by the U.S. Vice

President Al Gore; during this trip Kazakh Supreme Soviet ratified the NPT, signalling to the U.S. that the country had fulfilled all its obligations and should be regarded as a reliable partner. At the end of the visit A. Gore and N. Nazarbayev signed the Agreement Concerning the Destruction of Silo Launchers of Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles (ICBMs), Emergency Response, and the Prevention of Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (ICBMs), as well as several agreements on the Nunn-Lugar program, including five implementing agreements, under which the United States allocated \$85 million for Kazakhstan's nuclear disarmament program [38].

Gore also brought with him a letter from President Clinton inviting Nazarbayev to visit Washington in February 1994. The following visit confirmed the parties' commitment to disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. Three items on the agenda were particularly noteworthy for the development of bilateral relations:

- First, in response to Kazakhstan's accession to the NPT, President Clinton pledged (in addition to \$85 million under the Nunn-Lugar programme) to increase the U.S. aid from \$91 million in 1993 to \$311 million in 1994. In the following month the Defence Secretary William Perry visited Kazakhstan and consolidated the presidential agreements in the "Agreement on Conversion of Kazakhstan's Defence Industry" and the "Agreement on Intergovernmental Direct Communication between the Kazakhstan Ministry of Defence and the U.S. Department of Defence" [39];

- Second, Gore-Nazarbayev commission was established, similar to the Gore-Chernomyrdin bilateral commission designed to coordinate the development of U.S.-Russian relations in the nuclear and scientific spheres;

- Third, the presidents signed a "Bilateral Charter on Democratic Partnership" aimed at

strengthening the rule of law, market reforms and human rights in Kazakhstan.

In addition, one of the most important points of the charter was the promise of the United States to provide very limited, but still “security guarantees”, which were reaffirmed in the framework of the Memorandum on Security Assurances Related to Kazakhstan’s Accession to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons in Budapest on December 5, 1994.

The Budapest Memorandum reaffirmed the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Kazakhstan and (in paragraph 6) obliged the signatory countries to consult with the Kazakh government on all developments affecting these notions. As a result of the signed memorandum Kazakhstan obtained commitments from great powers to protect the state against aggression by third countries [40]. Hence, Kazakhstan began the process of removing nuclear material, in particular, highly enriched uranium (HEU) of the Ulba Metallurgical Plant, which had been previously bought by the U.S. government (agreement from November 17, 1994). According to a rough estimate, the Ulba plant alone contained 187 kg of metal enriched to about 98 per cent, 25 kg of uranium oxide, 170 kg of uranium-beryllium alloy fuel rods, 156 kg of scrap, damaged uranium-beryllium fuel rods, and powder. In addition to these figures, in late 1994 - as part of the top-secret Operation Sapphire - about 600 kilograms of unprotected highly enriched uranium (which by some miracle have not yet been dispersed) were also moved from the Ulba plant to the United States [42].

In addition to nuclear issues other agreements regulating trade, financial, and legal aspects of the U.S.-Kazakhstan cooperation were signed in 1994. For example, during Prime Minister Kazhegeldin’s visit to the United States statements on “Future Tasks of the Kazakhstani-American Committee on

Business Development” and on “Cooperation in Supporting the Rule of Law and Combating Crime” were issued, and on November 1 in Almaty the two governments negotiated a document, which permitted the United States to finance its NGOs in the implementation of assistance programs to Kazakhstan.

The aforementioned agreements formed the basis for the launch of the U.S.-Kazakhstan Joint Committee that was established to implement the provisions of the Charter for Democratic Partnership in the areas of business, defence, environment, science, and enterprise conversion. At this stage, however, there was a certain discrepancy in the priorities of the U.S. and Kazakhstan, where the first regarded the conversion of enterprises, dismantlement of nuclear weapons, and transportation of valuable nuclear materials to the U.S. as top priorities, while the latter was more focused on the economic cooperation programs. However, as most funding in this case was from Washington, the U.S. were able to set the priorities for bilateral cooperation [42].

In 1995 the “honeymoon” phase of the relationship between the two countries was overshadowed by the internal events of Kazakhstan. After the parliamentary elections of 1994 one of the candidates, Tatyana G. Kvyatkovskaya, filed a suit to the Constitutional Court of Kazakhstan on violation of the Election Code during the participant registration process. Following lengthy proceedings, the court issued an unexpected ruling in March confirming the violations and questioning the legitimacy of election and of the incumbent parliament. Without waiting for further action, the deputies promptly resigned on March 11, and the political life of the country in the absence of a parliament was regulated by the Law on Temporary Delegation of Additional Powers to the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan and Heads of Local Administrations (dated 10 December 1993).

These events in Kazakhstan were perceived positively by American counterparts. It is widely known that the U.S. ambassador to Kazakhstan W. Courtney had noted that Kazakhstan was “no longer a student but a teacher of democracy”. However, when a month later President Nazarbayev held a referendum extending his authority until the year 2000 instead of calling a presidential election, the U.S. was unpleasantly surprised, as they feared that their most important in Central Asia would turn from an emerging democracy into authoritarianism. In a similarly negative way the U.S. reacted to another referendum in Kazakhstan on August 30, 1995, which adopted a new constitution. One of the key features of the new constitution was the transformation of Kazakhstan into a presidential republic, which for American observers strengthened the view that authoritarian tendencies were developing in the country.

One should note that during that period the U.S. considered Kazakhstan as a potential beacon of liberal-democratic reorganization of the region, through which their own economic, political and geopolitical interests could be realized. The gradual modernisation of the country was planned through the privatisation of Kazakhstani enterprises and their conversion through the efforts of American companies, the expansion of trade and market relations, and the strengthening of the role of democratic institutions (i.e. through the activity of U.S. non-profit organisations operating in Kazakhstan on the basis of a bilateral agreement of 1994). Moreover, Washington believed that political life in Kazakhstan would take into account the Charter for Democratic Partnership, which despite certain ambiguity, still envisioned American involvement in disseminating liberal democratic values in the country.

Disagreement with the controversial political decisions, however, did not have

a critical impact on the U.S.-Kazakhstan relations; security and hydrocarbon development remained the focal points of bilateral relations. This is exemplified by the numerous reciprocal visits with the invariable signing of various agreements regulating the issue of the liquidation of the Soviet nuclear legacy or the participation of American business in the extraction of Kazakhstani resources. For instance, during Kazakhstani Prime Minister Kazhegeldin's visit to Washington, D.C. on March 20-27 he and U.S. Vice President A. Gore signed 10 documents concerning trade, ecology, crime fighting, finance, standardization and metrology, conversion of productions, non-proliferation of nuclear materials, etc.

A week later a reciprocal visit took place. The U.S. Secretary of Defence W. Perry arrived in Kazakhstan and speaking at a press conference on April 5, he mentioned the state of democracy in Kazakhstan but dedicated most of his speech to Kazakhstan's successes in the field of nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. During this visit, Perry did not only reaffirm Washington's commitment to implementing all the planned initiatives of the Nunn-Lugar programme, but also signed an additional agreement worth \$37 million. In doing so, the Secretary of Defence demonstrated that the first priority for Washington was to reduce the nuclear threat and that democracy-building was a secondary goal.

Nevertheless, the demand for democratic and economic reforms was inextricably linked to the implementation of the nuclear agreements. For example, on June 13-15 1995, when the American commission headed by Deputy Defence Secretary E. Carter visited Kazakhstan, officials from Washington demanded that Kazakhstan carry out general privatization, because the conversion of defence enterprises was to be carried out by American companies. In addition, the

delegation insisted on tax exemptions or, to be more precise, the complete elimination of taxes on equipment imported from the United States.

This was one of the key issues in the implementation of the Nunn-Lugar programme in Kazakhstan - the U.S. was keen to allocate money to transform Kazakhstan's economy to the maximum benefit of American business. For instance, most of the money allocated under the disarmament programme did not arrive to Kazakhstan in the form of financial resources, but was transferred to the accounts of American contractors, who either looked for subcontractors in Kazakhstan or carried out the projects themselves. It is no coincidence that a business handbook on Kazakhstan's military industry was timely published in the United States for the use by corporations, firms, and non-profit organizations planning to participate in the process [42].

The next step in joint security cooperation after the elimination of nuclear weapons and materials was Kazakhstan's accession to NATO's Partnership for Peace program. The accession agreement was signed in 1995, and the North Atlantic Alliance envisioned Kazakhstan as an important player across Eurasia, whereas Uzbekistan - which had always attracted the U.S. with its military strength - focused its security on the regional scale [43].

Overall the bilateral cooperation that occurred between 1991 and 1995 has benefited both sides. By April 1996 all nuclear weapons had been successfully removed from Kazakhstan for their reprocessing in Russia (1,040 warheads had been removed from ICBMs and 370 warheads from cruise missiles), after which the conversion and elimination of SLBMs remained to be handled. In addition, the United States built mutually beneficial relations with the largest and richest hydrocarbon country in Central Asia, and agreements also enabled the U.S.

corporations to start successfully work in the largest oil fields in Kazakhstan. Finally, from 1991 to 1995 - when the Democratic Party dominated Congress and the White House - the U.S. was relatively sympathetic to the idea of close cooperation between Russia and Kazakhstan to maintain control and stability in Central Asia. Russia was perceived by the democrats as the legal successor to the USSR, with its close ties to all the republics of the region, while Kazakhstan was viewed as a stable and strong secular state with a Muslim population capable of supporting Russia in this mission.

Kazakhstan could not complain either as its bilateral cooperation with the U.S. has allowed the country to successfully dismantle and remove its nuclear legacy (that otherwise would be costly to maintain and protect) and to present itself as a new and reliable participant in the international system. This bilateral cooperation also enabled Kazakhstan to attract investment in the oil and gas sector under production-sharing agreements and to develop business cooperation with Western entrepreneurs.

Liberal-democratic values for Kazakhstan during Clinton's second term

In 1996 a new milestone in the history of U.S.-Kazakhstan relations had begun. After the removal of all nuclear weapons from the territory by 1996 the U.S. interest in Kazakhstan has somewhat declined. If 1995 was the period where at least a couple dozen international agreements were signed, in 1996 there were none. Yet, despite the decrease in the intensity of the dialogue with the United States, Kazakhstan was actively expanding its cooperation with China, Iran, and Russia in the energy sphere. For instance, China won a tender to privatize 55% of JSC Uzenmunaigas, the Uzen field operator, whose oil reserves were estimated at 150-200 million tons [44]. Iran, as part of a ten-year agreement, began

to receive Kazakh oil from the Tengiz field, which was beneficial to both sides, but this activity was soon discontinued due to the U.S. law “On Sanctions Against Iran and Libya” (D’Amato-Kennedy Act), which prohibited companies associated with the U.S. to invest more than 40 million dollars a year in the oil and gas industry of Iran or Libya [45]. With regard to partnership with Russia - Kazakhstan was one of the founders of the new Caspian Pipeline Consortium (CPC) that directed additional flows of oil from the Tengiz field towards Russia.

In 1996 a new narrative had emerged in the U.S. criticising in the U.S. President Clinton’s failure of liberal-democratic reform programme in Central Asia and Russia. In particular, Moscow did not become a reliable ally and ‘policeman’ in the region as Washington had envisioned it. The criticism amplified when the Republicans won the November 1996 Congress elections, after which the U.S. turned from a “pro-Russian” policy to strengthening the U.S. direct presence in the region. The movement was led by the new U.S. Secretary of State M. Albright, who was the student of the well-known conservative political scientist Zbigniew Brzezinski.

As a result of new policy directions the Clinton administration had to re-evaluate its Central Asian strategy. The basic provisions of the new policy were formulated in the summer of 1997 in a speech by Deputy Secretary of State S. Talbot at Johns Hopkins University. In his speech, Talbot explicitly stated that the countries of the Caucasus and Central Asia have been under the foreign power’s oppression of foreign powers for most of their history and today they have a chance to put their ‘pawn’ role behind them, and the U.S. would support them in that.

The Talbot Plan consisted of the idea that democratic reforms put in motion through the internal mechanisms of the Caucasus

and Central Asian countries would spur the economic development of the newly independent states and bring stability to a region that stretched from the Black Sea to Pamir Mountains. This, in turn, would create new trade routes from Asia to Europe and provide American energy companies with business opportunities [46].

In other words, Washington has declared the region to be an area of strategic interest. However, there was never any talk of a strategic U.S. presence: the reforms were to be carried out by Central Asian governments themselves, supervised locally by NGOs or by international organizations from abroad.

The new U.S. foreign policy approach was accompanied in the second half of the 1990s period by the intensification of bilateral diplomatic activity. This includes the signing of numerous bilateral security and economic agreements including the Agreement on Cooperation in the Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy, (which strengthens the IAEA’s role in controlling Kazakhstan’s nuclear complex) and the Action Program for Kazakhstan-U.S. Economic Partnership (supplement to the Charter on Democratic Partnership). During her visit to Kazakhstan in the fall of 1997, first Lady Hillary Clinton reaffirmed that Kazakhstan remained a strategic partner of the United States in Central Asia. Although such diplomatic activity did not bring the partnership to a fundamentally new level, the signing of the aforementioned agreements remained an important element in demonstrating U.S. interest in Kazakhstan.

The oil and gas cooperation did a solid job in cementing bilateral relations, however, Washington still did not express interest in areas other than the transit of hydrocarbons and the elimination of the Soviet nuclear legacy. As before it perceived Central Asia as a region gravitating towards Russia and was not prepared to invest substantial resources in the democratisation or economic development

of the region due to the ambiguity of the long-term impact. Such attitude was not only applicable to Kazakhstan, but also relevant to other Turkic republics of Central Asia: Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Kyrgyzstan, where the United States generally sought to support the development of democracy and free markets, although cooperation with authoritarian regimes of Karimov or Niyazov was perceived rather painfully by the liberal democratic circles. Hence, in the late 1990s the U.S. supported the nation-states verbally and through limited financial transfers and did not intend to intervene deeply in the life of the region. This signified a significantly reduced American presence and influence in Central Asia.

Nevertheless, the established decade-long U.S.-Kazakhstan trade and economic ties have continued to develop (Figure 1). The observers point to the fact that since 1991 not a single U.S. company has curtailed its activities in Kazakhstan. In the late 1990s bilateral trade was somewhat disrupted by the negative impact of the 1997-1999 Russian economic crisis that caused the trade turnover between Kazakhstan and the United States to fall from \$353 million (1997) to \$272 million (1998) [47].

The U.S. Congress also widely supported the administration's new policy of transforming Central Asia into a free-market and democratic region. Fearing the increase of influence of Russia, Iran, and China in the region on March 10, 1999 the lawmakers passed their own Silk Road Strategy Act, in which they noted the need to support the development of political, economic, and security cooperation between Central Asian states, the South Caucasus and the West. With proper funding (the text of the act did not specify the amount and timing) the implementation of the bill, according to initiator Samuel Brownback, should ensure security of Caspian hydrocarbons supply and reduce the dependence of the United States on

the unstable exporters of oil from the Middle East [48]. Kazakhstan's role in the project was not explicitly mentioned, but the importance of the country was evident due to the mention of regional oil projects. American Atlantic Council think tank stated that the combination of economic reforms and abundant natural and human resources supported Kazakhstan in becoming a regional leader in economic and political dimensions, back in 1996 [49].

The fourth visit of President Nazarbayev to the United States that took place on December 17-21, 1999 turned out to be quite successful in bringing political dividends. In the course of four days the Kazakhstani leader met with President Clinton, Vice President Gore, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, the head of the Foreign Relations Committee of the U.S. House of Representatives Benjamin Gilman, and President of the World Jewish Congress Edgar Bronfman [50].

President Clinton praised democratic reforms in Kazakhstan and the republic's role in stabilizing the situation in Central Asia. On the meeting with Vice President Gore, a "Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Government of the United States on Cooperation on Consular Cooperation" was signed, and the outcomes of the sixth meeting of the U.S.-Kazakhstan Joint Commission has been reviewed [59]. In addition, the International Foundation for Electoral Systems awarded the Kazakhstani President a diploma for "Outstanding Contribution to the Promotion of Democracy" [60]. In addition, some financial issues were also resolved i.e. an agreement was reached on an IMF loan of USD 140 million to the energy company KEGOC, and several American private companies agreed to invest in the Astana hotel complex, in particular in the reconstruction of Hotel Esil [50].

Toward the end of the 1990s, however, Kazakhstan's steady economic growth and

successful international initiatives have simultaneously led not only to the strengthening of the political position of the country and the decrease in the dependence on sentiment in the United States. Meanwhile, Washington continued to insist that the economic liberalisation process is incomplete without appropriate political reforms, otherwise any positive changes would be undermined by rampant corruption. On this basis American politicians and diplomats - while continuing to praise bilateral cooperation - began to criticize the Kazakhstani government on human rights violations and passive political competition (citing the events of 1995 when Nazarbayev extended his own term until 2000 without holding a presidential election). Such principle stance brought some tension to the relationship between the two countries. Still, Kazakhstan's negative reaction to the criticism did not affect the practical implementation of large-scale projects in the economic and security sphere, although it did somewhat limit the opportunities for further development.

In particular, as analyst of the Atlantic Centre Sean Roberts notes the U.S. was unwilling to defend Kazakhstan's established political order in the international community,

fearing a wave of discontent and criticism for supporting an authoritarian government and the pursuit of short-term profits. Meanwhile, Kazakhstan was reluctant to get actively involved in the U.S. transcaspiian initiatives, limiting its activity to signing declarations and expressing the willingness to consider project documentations i.e. on the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline [51]. Kazakhstan began making a gradual U-turn towards its nearest neighbours, Russia and China, by building new pipelines and joining the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) in 1999. As a result, by 2001 the United States did not play a similarly influential role in determining Kazakhstan's foreign policy as it was the case in the early 1990s [49].

In early 2000, the U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright went on a tour of the three Central Asian countries - Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan - to support the U.S. Central Asian policy that emerged from the proclamation of the "Talbot Doctrine". Albright's visit to Astana (now Nur-Sultan) was the only significant political event in the U.S.-Kazakhstan cooperation during that period.

The agenda of talks in Astana was primarily related to the economic aspects

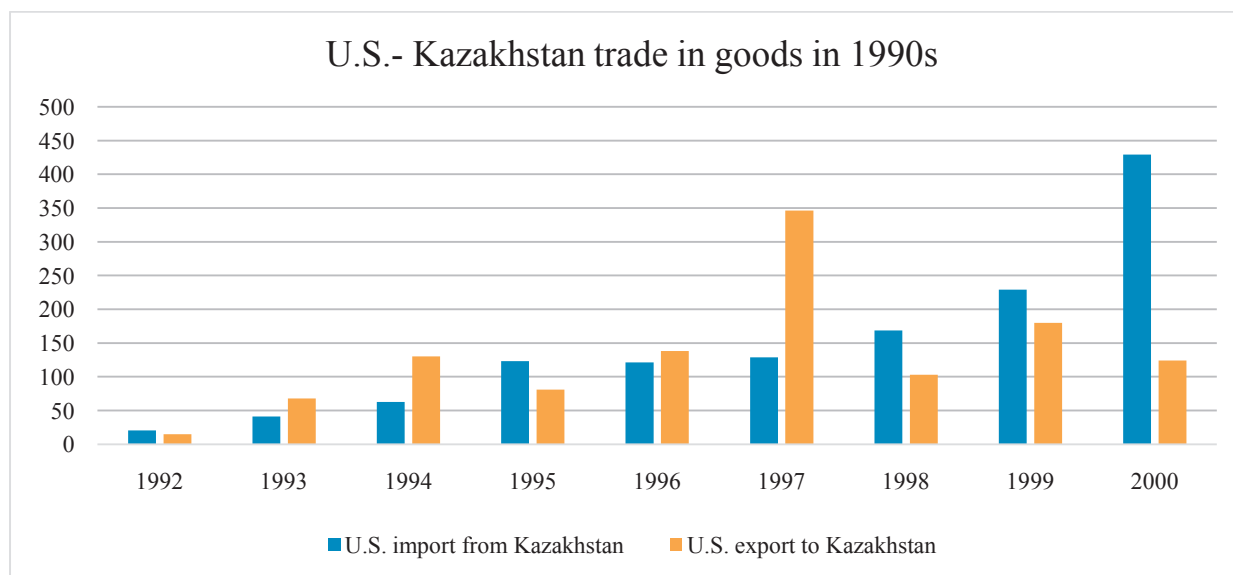


Figure 1 – U.S. Kazakhstan trade in goods in 1990s in mln. dollars
(based on official statistical data from the U.S. Census Bureau census.gov)

of the construction of the Baku-Ceyhan oil pipeline and human rights issues in the country. The Americans continued to draw a clear correlation between the development of democracy and the stability of the investment climate, which in their opinion was especially important in a country with widespread capital investment from U.S. oil corporations.

The narrative in Washington was that over the past ten years the President of Kazakhstan had transformed from the leader of the nation into a dictator who suppressed any manifestation of opposition activity [52]. This was vividly expressed by U.S. congressmen during a session in the House of Representatives on “Democracy in the Central Asian Republics” on 12 April 2000 [53]. The Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee Benjamin Gilman even sent a letter to Secretary of State Albright, suggesting that President Nazarbayev should be encouraged to engage in dialogue with the opposition, allocating them time on federal television channels and providing printing capacity [54].

Gilman’s proposals were almost entirely implemented during Albright’s visit to Astana, where she met with representatives of opposition parties. At the insistence of the Kazakhstani authorities, not only radicals, but also leaders of parliamentary fractions loyal to the president were invited to the meeting, but the very fact of such a meeting with the highest US official demonstrated how far Washington was willing to go in demanding liberal-democratic reforms in Kazakhstan. Without a doubt that the interference of the U.S. in the internal affairs of Kazakhstan was deemed unacceptable, as President Nazarbayev readily mentioned during a press conference following the meeting [55]. In response the American side responded by expressing its disappointment over the illegal sale of a batch of Kazakhstani MiG-21 aircrafts (about 30 pieces) to North Korea, for which the Americans felt the responsible

officials and businessmen were punished too mildly [56].

Nevertheless, both sides realised that blaming each other was not productive for building strong and mutually beneficial relations, and that efforts should be pointed at finding common interests. One of the key reasons for Albright’s trip was the threat of the spread of Islamic extremism throughout the region, which was clearly demonstrated in the summer of 1999 during the attempt of militants to penetrate into Uzbek Ferghana through Kyrgyzstan’s territory - where Kyrgyz law enforcement agencies were completely helpless in the face of a massive attack. Despite the fact that Kazakhstan is unlikely to be directly involved in potential hostilities on the territories of Uzbekistan or Kyrgyzstan, its role in ensuring stability and security in the region was unequivocally acknowledged in the U.S. Not coincidentally, shortly before the Secretary of State’s visit, CIA Director George Tenet and FBI head Louis Freeze also visited Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan [56].

The topic of Kazakhstan’s foreign relations is an interesting case, not least because of the unique geopolitical framework that the country exists in. The dynamics of the new Great Game framework and challenges associated with the multivector policy represent an integral part of Kazakhstan’s path to development, affecting all spheres - from energy sector to education [57]. The focal point of this article is to closely examine the initial path of U.S.-Kazakhstan relationship based on factual information in the period of 1990s.

Conclusion

Overall, it can be noted that bilateral relations between the U.S. and Kazakhstan have stepped into the new millennium at a fairly mature level. Ever since Kazakhstan’s independence both countries have not only committed to each other verbally but have

also built strong ties on the political and economic planes. In the early 1990s the U.S. mainly focused on the elimination of the Soviet nuclear legacy and the positioning of American business in the country's oil and gas sector. Towards the end of the decade the focus shifted to increasing the role of Kazakhstan in the democratisation of the region, not least because the country was regarded by U.S. analysts as one of the most politically stable in Central Asia. In order to pursue the goal of spreading democratic values in the region, the U.S. established its own legal framework in the form of the New Silk Road Act, but due to geographical remoteness of the region, significant cultural differences, and the practical problems of opposing the influence of Russia, China or Iran, Washington was not prepared to spend truly significant resources

on the liberal-democratic development of Central Asia.

Kazakhstan, in turn, has gained considerable dividends from its partnership with the United States: investments from Western corporations have nurtured its oil and gas complex, while the joint cooperation in the Nunn-Lugar programme helped to save considerable funds for the country (in eliminating the nuclear complex), simultaneously raising country's prestige on the world arena. As a result of economic development and the formation of a successful multi-vector foreign policy Kazakhstan has been perceived not only as one of the former Soviet republics, but as a full and authoritative participant in the international system that has faithfully fulfilled its obligations.

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MODERN FOREIGN POLICY PRIORITIES OF TAJIKISTAN

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Sherali Rizoyon *

Senior Lecturer, Department of Diplomacy and Foreign Policy of the Republic of Tajikistan, Tajik National University, Candidate of Political Science (Dushanbe, Tajikistan)

Abstract. The article analyzes the priority areas of Tajikistan's modern foreign policy in the context of the transformation of regional processes in Central Asia. The author describes and examines the factor of Afghanistan in the perception of Central Asia by the world and regional powers as well as its impact on the foreign policy of the countries of the region and Tajikistan in particular. The process of formation of Tajikistan's foreign policy strategy and its structural characteristics are demonstrated. The author explains conditions of proclamation and implementation of the 'open door policy' and provides an overview of the modern Concept of Tajikistan's Foreign Policy. In conclusion, general findings and outlook on political processes in Central Asia and Tajikistan are outlined.

Key words: *Tajikistan, Central Asia, foreign policy, Afghanistan, National Interests, Security, Multi-Vector Policy.*

ТӘЖІКСТАННЫҢ ҚАЗІРГІ ЗАМАНҒЫ СЫРТҚЫ САЯСИ БАСЫМДЫҚТАРЫ

Шерали Ризоён

Андатпа. Мақалада Орталық Азиядағы аймақтық үдерістердің трансформациясы жағдайында Тәжікстанның қазіргі заманғы сыртқы саясатының басым бағыттары талданады. Автор Орталық Азияны әлемдік және өңірлік державалардың қабылдаудағы Ауғанстан факторын және оның аймақ елдерінің, атап айтқанда Тәжікстанның сыртқы саясатына әсерін ашып зерттейді. Тәжікстанның сыртқы саяси стратегиясының қалыптасу үрдісі және оның құрылымдық ерекшеліктері көрсетілген. Автор «ашық есік саясатын» жариялау және жүзеге асыру шарттарын ашып, Тәжікстанның сыртқы саясатының қазіргі тұжырымдамасына шолу жасайды. Қорытындыда Орталық Азия мен Тәжікстандағы саяси үдерістерге қатысты жалпы тұжырымдар мен болжамдар көрсетілген.

* sherali.rizoyon@gmail.com

Түйін сөздер: Тәжікстан, Орталық Азия, сыртқы саясат, Ауғанстан, ұлттық мүдделер, қауіпсіздік, көпвекторлы саясат

СОВРЕМЕННЫЕ ВНЕШНЕПОЛИТИЧЕСКИЕ ПРИОРИТЕТЫ ТАДЖИКИСТАНА

Шерали Ризоён

Аннотация. В статье анализируются приоритетные направления современной внешней политики Таджикистана в условиях трансформации региональных процессов в Центральной Азии. Автор раскрывает и исследует фактор Афганистана в восприятии Центральной Азии мировыми и региональными державами и его влияние на внешнюю политику стран региона и, в частности, Таджикистана. Показан процесс формирования внешнеполитической стратегии Таджикистана и ее структурные особенности. Автор раскрывает условия провозглашения и реализации «политики открытых дверей» и даёт обзор современной Концепции внешней политики Таджикистана. В заключении представлены общие выводы и прогноз относительно политических процессов в Центральной Азии и Таджикистане.

Ключевые слова: Таджикистан, Центральная Азия, внешняя политика, Афганистан, национальные интересы, безопасность, многовекторная политика

Introduction

The system of international relations experienced significant changes at the end of the twentieth century. It influenced the emergence of new sovereign states on the political map of the world. The modification of the post-war architecture of international relations contributed to the formation of new non-traditional challenges and threats of general global significance. Thus, after the decline of the bipolar world (the collapse of the USSR), there were both signs of the formation of a unipolar world (where the United States played the leading role) and a multipolar world (the number of independent states and UN members changed significantly). In these circumstances, Tajikistan declared its state sovereignty and began to establish cooperation with the states of the world.

The importance of considering Tajikistan's foreign policy strategy in the current circumstances arises from the assumption that in the era of the post-COVID world

the situation in Central Asia may change. The 2020 overview has demonstrated that political processes in this region predictably remain unforeseeable. On the one hand, we observe cooperation among the countries of the region, which has been shaping up slowly but consistently over the past 3 years. Nevertheless, there are still few conditionalities in the intra-regional relations of the countries, which can be assessed as constraints to cooperation in Central Asia. On the other hand, strategies of global and regional powers are gradually changing and their substantial transformation may be affected by the situation in Afghanistan, namely the effectiveness (or failure) of the peace process in the country. Together, both of these notable processes may affect the overall situation in the region, which will certainly have an impact on the degree of implementation of national interests for both Central Asian countries and Tajikistan.

This work is written based on the country's

scientific discourse to reveal the features of modern foreign policy priorities of Tajikistan. The choice of this approach is justified by the fact that, firstly, not all the research and published works in Tajikistan are presented to foreign readers; secondly, the assessments and works of foreign authors on the current priorities of Tajikistan's foreign policy do not always reflect the reality; and thirdly, a comprehensive analysis of Tajikistan's foreign policy in modern conditions and a comparison of the approaches and opinions of domestic and foreign researchers will be presented later as a logical continuation of this work.

Research methods

The methodological basis of this article is the descriptive narrative approach, which allowed us to consider the foundations of the formation of Tajikistan's foreign policy and its structural characteristics as well as to demonstrate the contemporary priorities in the network of relations with the countries of the world.

The method of comparative analysis made it possible to identify the peculiarities of the foreign policy strategy declaration and implementation in the context of changing situation in Central Asia and Afghanistan. On the basis of the analysis, we were able to assume scenarios for the situation development in this region, policy transformation of global and regional powers, as well as emergence of new challenges and threats that will have an immediate impact on the foreign and domestic policy of Tajikistan.

Results of the study

The modern foreign policy of Tajikistan is based on an 'open-door policy', which involves the development of relations with all external partners. This principle was noted in the first Concept of Foreign Policy, approved by the Decree of the President of the Republic

of Tajikistan on September 24, 2002 [1,68] and was officially declared at the solemn meeting in honor of the tenth anniversary of the 16th Session of the Supreme Council of the Republic of Tajikistan on November 15, 2002. The Leader of the Nation Emomali Rahmon emphasized at the meeting that "Tajikistan will continue to strive to develop mutually beneficial relations with all organizations, as well as with parties that want to have friendly and disinterested relations with us. In other words, **our foreign policy will be based on the principles of an 'open-door' policy for the sake of good and mutually beneficial relations**" [2,40]. The open-door policy has been the main principle for the implementation of Tajikistan's foreign policy strategy for two decades.

The factor of Afghanistan in the fate of Central Asia

An essential condition for Tajikistan's announcement of an open-door policy was the change in the position of Central Asia in global processes, when the region from the periphery of world politics turned into a field of increased attention of global and regional powers. The three decade-long history of Central Asia in global politics demonstrates that the declared goals have not been achieved, and the region as a whole and the countries in particular have not been able to transform into a full-fledged player on the global stage. Today, Central Asia is treated rather as a site for implementation of global and regional powers' policy. If we compare it with other regions of Eurasia in terms of importance in global politics, unfortunately, despite its sufficient potential (natural, human and location factor), Central Asia is not as important as regional experts and researchers say. It is worth mentioning that one of the reasons for the increased attention to the region from external powers, along with the neighborhood with Russia and China, is the factor of Afghanistan.

Through the example of Tajikistan, it should be emphasized that with the beginning of the international anti-terrorist operation in Afghanistan after the well-known events of September 11, 2001 provided an opportunity for official Dushanbe to establish mutually beneficial relations with Western countries. Although, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan already in the 90s of the twentieth century had relationships with key global players. Tajikistan faced an internal civil conflict in the first decade of independence and was busy with post-conflict peacebuilding. The active participation of official Dushanbe in regional processes begins precisely in the 21st century, which became a condition for the announcement of an open-door policy.

An analysis of the situation in the first decade of the 21st century in Central Asia shows that the regional integration was discontinued when countries began to compete with each other to gain benefits in relations with key players in world politics. Also, the process of cooling of relations within the region begins, which ultimately significantly restrained the subjectivity of Central Asia. Today, the factor of Afghanistan has a significant impact on the image of Central Asia on the world stage, which contributes to the entry of the region into world politics.

In the early 2000s, experts and journalists began to discuss and write about the beginning of the 'New Great Game', meaning the 'Great Game' of the late 19th century, when the 'Pamir Issue' was resolved between the Russian and British empires, and the lines of delimitation of the strategic interests of these states where Afghanistan was perceived as a buffer country between them.

Today, it is obvious that the ongoing processes in Afghanistan with the beginning of the peace process in this country in order to achieve "respected and sustainable peace"

[sulhe bozzat va poydor]⁴ will significantly affect the region as a whole, and the Central Asian states in particular.

The current situation in Afghanistan, as in the early 2000s, shows that the interests and strategies of global and regional powers are intertwined in this country. The United States, Russia, China, Great Britain, France, Germany, Iran, Pakistan, India, Turkey, the Persian Gulf states and other countries have permanent interests in Afghanistan. It has been unchanged for a long time, and the territory of Afghanistan is used as a space for competition and opposition to each other.

An analysis of the available literature shows that the interests and positions of the global and regional powers involved in the problem of Afghanistan, and how their policies can promote (or oppose) the achievement of peace in this country, stabilize (destabilize) the political situation and ensure (vulnerability) security. Thus, Central Asia as a region, and the states included in it as Afghanistan's northern neighbors, will attract the attention of global and regional powers. It should be emphasized that the policy of the Central Asian states towards Afghanistan is considered friendly and acceptable to official Kabul. Since the countries of Central Asia do not interfere (and do not have such potential) in the internal processes of Afghanistan, which is impossible to say about other neighbors of this state. Thus, in the foreign policy strategy of the Central Asian states, in particular Tajikistan in the fourth decade of independence, the factor of Afghanistan and the ongoing processes in this country will be felt.

In view of this, let us briefly consider Tajikistan's contemporary foreign policy priorities and the specifics of their perception by domestic experts and researchers:

³ Дискурс политического руководства Афганистана, когда они в официальных встречах и мероприятиях говорят о достижении мира и начала межафганских переговоров.

The concept of multi-vector in the foreign policy of Tajikistan

The concept of 'multi-vector policy' in the scientific and expert discourse of Tajikistan appeared after the panel discussion of the Center for Strategic Research under the President of the Republic of Tajikistan in 2009 on the topic 'Multi-vector foreign policy of the Central Asian states and its prospects' [3]. Then it became the focus of regular attention of researchers and practitioners. So, in 2009, a collection of articles, interviews and speeches of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Tatarstan Khamrokhon Zarifi was published under the title 'Multi-vector diplomacy of Tajikistan' [4], and an article by Professor Abdunabi Sattorzoda on the topic 'Theoretical aspects of multi-vector foreign policy' [5] was published in the scientific journal of the Center for Strategic Research 'Tajikistan and the Modern World', which in fact became the first attempt to theorize the country's multi-vector strategy in foreign policy. A. Sattorzoda published a scientific monograph entitled 'Actual problems of Tajikistan's foreign policy (multi-vector in action)' [6], in 2014 which has become a valuable research material on this issue. Along with the aforementioned collection of H. Zarifi, this book are the most important works that scientifically substantiate the multi-vector foreign policy of Tajikistan. It is noteworthy that in the second Concept of Tajikistan's Foreign Policy (adopted in January 2015), this concept is noted as a method of protecting and realizing national interests in the country's foreign policy. In other words, the modern multi-vector foreign policy of the Republic of Tajikistan can be characterized as the evolution of the 'open-door' policy.

Foreign policy priorities of Tajikistan in the current conditions

A key change in the understanding of the

priorities of Tajikistan's modern foreign policy can be called the speech of the President of the Republic of Tajikistan Emomali Rahmon at a meeting with the country's diplomatic officials on the occasion of the opening of the new building of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Tajikistan on March 15, 2013, where the urgent problems of protecting and realizing Tajikistan's national interests in modern conditions were considered in detail. Thus, the Head of State emphasized the fact that "The geopolitical position of Tajikistan, its natural-economic and demographic capabilities, as well as the level of socio-economic development require an active, realistic and balanced policy. At the same time, it should be noted that the success of foreign policy largely depends on the balance of goals and the possibilities of their implementation" [7,65].

Then the Head of State directed to develop a new Foreign Policy Concept of Tajikistan, which had been approved by the Decree of the President of the Republic of Tajikistan dated January 27, 2015, No. 332 [8].

A feature of the above stages is that in each of these periods the priorities of foreign policy and the structure of Tajikistan's national interests are determined in a new way. The time frame can also be marked. Each stage is the beginning of a deep understanding of the state priorities of Tajikistan. The third feature is that the Head of State instructed to develop a Concept of Tajikistan's foreign policy, which, respectively, together identified the main priorities of Tajikistan in modern international relations.

The Concept defines national interests in the country's foreign policy [8], which at this stage consist of:

- protecting and strengthening the state sovereignty of Tajikistan and ensuring its national security; the formation of a belt of security and good neighborliness on the borders of the country;

- development of relations of trust, friendship and cooperation with all countries of the world on the basis of mutual consideration of interests;

- creating favorable conditions for economic, social and cultural development, gradual growth in the well-being of the people, ensuring the economic security of the country;

- ensuring energy independence of Tajikistan, achieving food security and getting the country out of the communication deadlock;

- ensuring and protecting the rights and freedoms, dignity and interests of citizens of Tajikistan inside and outside the country;

- strengthening the positive image of Tajikistan in the world as a democratic, secular and legal state;

- promoting the creative and legal activities of the societies of Tajiks and compatriots in other countries.

It is known that the cooperative nature of modern international relations contributes to the realization of the national interests of one particular country. Today, taking into account global and regional challenges and threats, the countries of the world cannot ensure their own national security and the implementation of national interests in foreign policy on their own. Thus, in the Foreign Policy Concept of Tajikistan, multilateral diplomacy is included in the list of the country's foreign policy priorities.

The Concept defines that Tajikistan considers international organizations and institutions as:

- the vital mechanism for uniting efforts to counter modern challenges and threats;

- an indispensable platform for resolving disputes and problems in the system of international relations;

- an effective tool for strengthening of international peace and stability.

Thus, Tajikistan "in order to make its

contribution to the formation of a new and fair structure of international and regional relations, as well as to **protect and promote its national interests** within their framework, participates in their activities" [8].

Priority international organizations in Tajikistan's foreign policy have identified such structures as the UN, OSCE, CIS, SCO, CSTO, ECO (ECO), ADC (Asian Dialogue for Cooperation), CICA, UNESCO, NATO and international financial institutions.

According to the text of the current Concept, the following states are the priority directions of Tajikistan's foreign policy:

1. Russian Federation;
2. Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Kyrgyzstan;
3. Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia;
4. People's Republic China;
5. Islamic Republic of Afghanistan;
6. Islamic Republic of Iran;
7. United States of America;
8. Canada, Cuba, Mexico, Brazil and Argentina;
9. Germany, Great Britain, France, Italy, Spain, Switzerland, Belgium, Austria, Czech Republic, Poland, Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia;
10. Japan, Korea, Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, Vietnam and Singapore;
11. Turkey;
12. India;
13. Pakistan;
14. Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates;
15. Egypt;
16. Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Libya;
17. South Africa and Mozambique;
18. Australia and New Zealand

Thus, the development and strengthening of relations with global and regional powers, as well as with neighboring countries, is of key importance in Tajikistan's contemporary foreign policy strategy.

The conditions for expanding Tajikistan's cooperation with the above-mentioned countries in a bilateral and multilateral format, in the context of the provisions of the current Foreign Policy Concept, are:

First, the factor of traditional challenges and threats: international terrorism, extremism, drug trafficking, as well as unpredictable challenges associated with the confrontation of global powers in various regions of the world, including Central Asia.

Second, the factor of economic diplomacy. Economic diplomacy is primarily aimed at achieving national development goals. At the present stage, the goal is to contribute to the effective implementation of the "National Development Strategy of the Republic of Tajikistan for the period up to 2030" [9] by attracting foreign investment in priority sectors of the economy of Tajikistan. This National Strategy will be implemented in three stages; four strategic objectives are defined: ensuring energy security and efficient use of electricity (1), breaking the communication deadlock and becoming a transit country (2), ensuring food security and access to quality food (3) expanding productive employment (4), which implies the industrialization of the country's economy. Recently, the country's economic diplomacy has been intensified to diversify investment resources. The tasks of economic diplomacy and one of the important priorities of Tajikistan's foreign policy are considered to be the protection of economic interests, the formation of external favorable conditions for strengthening the economic potential and expanding the economic base of the country, the implementation of the "green economy" in the country, the protection of business abroad, attracting foreign investors, joining the international and regional transport, energy and communication infrastructure, the expansion of multilateral cooperation within the WTO, UN agencies and international financial institutions, as well as the expansion

of trade and economic cooperation with neighboring countries, which, according to the geographical location of Tajikistan, along with China and Afghanistan, includes all the countries of Central Asia.

Third, the factor of water cooperation diplomacy. This priority of Tajikistan's foreign policy is due to the natural conditions of the country, which is among the top ten countries in the world with significant reserves of water resources. Tajikistan's water cooperation diplomacy can be divided into two areas:

1) Actualization of global problems, i.e. access of the world's population to drinking water, efficient use of water resources; and solutions to environmental problems connected with water resources. "The Republic of Tajikistan, while implementing water diplomacy, sets the goal of playing an active role in the world arena in resolving water related issues" [8]. At the international level, The Republic of Tajikistan remains a recognized leader of water diplomacy. Since 1999, the world community has supported four global initiatives of Tajikistan on the water issue, which were maintained by the relevant resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly [10,115]. These are "The International Year of Freshwater, 2003", "The International Decade for Action "Water for Life" 2005-2015", "The International Year of Water Cooperation, 2013", and the International Decade for Action "Water for Sustainable Development", which has started on March 22, 2018 and is ending on March 22, 2028.

2) The use of the water and energy potential for the sustainable development of the country through the construction of hydropower facilities and the production of environmentally friendly and cheap electricity. Completion of the construction and full operation of the Rogun Hydroelectric Power Plants (HPP), as well as the construction of other Hydroelectric Power Plants (HPP) in

inland rivers and later on in trans-boundary rivers may be a condition for using the existing potential to provide sustainable development of Tajikistan. It should be emphasized that over the past 4 years water-energy cooperation has been transformed in Central Asia and, in general, the potential of Tajikistan in the future can be used by the countries of the region to achieve national development goals.

Fourth, the factor of cultural-humanitarian diplomacy. In the modern world, issues of cultural-humanitarian cooperation are updated and act as instruments of “soft power”. In the context of globalization, there are both observed the interpenetration and complementarity of cultures and values, and tendencies in the formation of conditions aimed at strengthening the crisis of identity. In these conditions, an important point in the preservation of national originality for any state is limiting the negative impact of cultural-humanitarian intervention. Also, in the framework of cultural-humanitarian diplomacy, it is considered a priority of forming a positive image of Tajikistan at the regional and global level. It is expected that in the medium term, the factor of cultural-humanitarian cooperation both in the world and in Central Asia will increase, and a preventive measure to minimize negative consequences is the development of policy which is possible to implement based on conditions and economic potential.

Fifth, the factor of information diplomacy. Strengthening the foundations of the information society and the intellectualization of all spheres of public administration today significantly affect the overall global processes. Information technologies act as a policy-forming factor, without which it is impossible to realize a policy aimed at protecting national interests. The role of new media and social networks is steadily increasing and they have become an effective tool for international cooperation and the

formation of public consciousness. Under these conditions, the implementation of information diplomacy for Tajikistan allows to ensure information security and limit the influence of “fake-news” both on the internal audience and on external consumers on the main provisions of the country’s state strategy. An essential point is also the issues of the country’s security from cyber terrorism and cyber extremism, which are currently being actualized in the information space of Central Asia.

Conclusion

The analysis of Tajikistan’s contemporary foreign policy priorities has demonstrated that Central Asia as a region, and its countries as neighbors, are the key priorities since the processes occurring in this space have an impact on the overall situation in the country, the level of security, and the degree of implementation of national interests.

In the conditions of state independence, Tajikistan has formed its own vision of foreign policy implementation; a number of practical studies in this area was conducted. The country has developed and is implementing an ‘open door policy’ with the further transformation to the multi-vector principle. Although, in fact, foreign policy cannot be single-vector or isolated and distant from regional and global powers. For such countries as Tajikistan, the acceptable approach in implementation of foreign policy is the principle of ‘openness’, since they do not have disproportionate ambitions and aspirations. For two decades, the political leadership of Tajikistan has been implementing this approach. At this stage, it is consistent with the vital national interests and reflects them.

The ongoing and future processes of Central Asia in the medium run will be influenced by the situation in Afghanistan. The active policy of the countries of the region in this area, which is observed today, can be beneficial

for the expansion of trans-regional relations, diversification of economic cooperation, development of transport infrastructure, ensuring security and reducing the negative impact of potential and real challenges and threats.

We can safely assume that in the fourth decade, the public diplomacy of global and regional powers in Central Asia will intensify and the information warfare between them will escalate, leading to hybrid wars in many different variations. It is expected that the 'soft power' tools of these countries will

significantly influence the formation of public consciousness on both foreign and domestic political agendas. In this regard, the issue of close cooperation between experts and researchers on the analysis of ongoing processes and the joint production becomes more relevant.

In general, the research on Tajikistan's contemporary foreign policy priorities has demonstrated that this policy is primarily aimed at the protection and implementation of national interests, which can contribute to the country's sustainable development.

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EUROPEAN UNION AND CENTRAL ASIA: NEW HORIZONS FOR ENHANCED COOPERATION

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Murat Laumulin *

Chief Research Fellow at the KazISS under the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Doctor of Political Science, Professor
(Nur-Sultan, Kazakhstan)

Assima Aubakir **

PhD student of the Academy of Public Administration under the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan
(Nur-Sultan, Kazakhstan)

Abstract. The article examines the role of the European Union as a stable and promising partner for the Central Asian region at the current stage. The new strategy of relations between the European Union and Central Asia, adopted in June 2019, that takes into account global changes in the international arena, as well as the priorities of the countries of the region in their relations with the EU, is a confirmation of this fact. It is expected that the updated EU policy to the Central Asian countries will allow to strengthen existing cooperation and focus on the most productive projects and, most importantly, modify the approaches and aspects of interaction in order to enter a better format of interaction. The relevance of this article is due to the need for a comprehensive study of the main directions and instruments of the European Union's policy towards the region of Central Asia. At the same time, the main task of this work is to determine the possibilities and prospects for the implementation of the EU's new Strategy for Central Asia.

Key words: *European Union, Central Asia, the new EU Strategy for Central Asia, Cooperation, Connectivity, Partnership for Sustainability, Partnership for Prosperity, European Green Deal.*

* muratlau@mail.ru

** kazcan10@gmail.com

ЕУРОПАЛЫҚ ОДАҚ ЖӘНЕ ОРТАЛЫҚ АЗИЯ: КЕҢЕЙТІЛГЕН ЫНТЫМАҚТАСТЫҚТЫҢ ЖАҢА МҮМКІНШІЛІКТЕРІ

Мұрат Лаумулин, Әсима Әубәкір

Андатпа. Мақалада Еуропалық одақтың қазіргі кезеңдегі Орталық Азия аймағы үшін тұрақты және перспективалы серіктес ретіндегі рөлі қарастырылады. Халықаралық аренадағы жаһандық өзгерістерді, сондай-ақ аймақ елдерінің ЕО-мен қатынастарындағы басымдықтарын ескере отырып, 2019 жылғы маусымда қабылданған Еуроодақ пен Орталық Азия арасындағы қатынастардың жаңа стратегиясы осының дәлелі болып табылады. ЕО-ның Орталық Азия елдеріне қатысты жаңартылған саясаты оған қазіргі ынтымақтастықты нығайтуға және неғұрлым өнімді жобаларға назар аударуға, ең бастысы, өзара іс-қимылдың неғұрлым сапалы форматына шығу мақсатында өзара іс-қимылдың тәсілдері мен аспектілерін түрлендіруге мүмкіндік береді деп күтілуде. Бұл жұмыстың өзектілігі Еуропалық Одақтың Орталық Азия елдеріне қатысты саясатының негізгі бағыттары мен құралдарын жан-жақты зерттеу қажеттілігімен байланысты. Сонымен бірге жұмыстың басты міндеті - ЕО-ның Орталық Азияға арналған жаңа стратегиясын іске асыру мүмкіншіліктері мен келешегін анықтау.

Түйін сөздер: Еуропалық Одақ, Орталық Азия, ЕО-ның Орталық Азия бойынша жаңа стратегиясы, ынтымақтастық, өзара байланыс, тұрақтылық үшін серіктестік, өркендеу үшін серіктестік, еуропалық жасыл курс.

ЕВРОПЕЙСКИЙ СОЮЗ И ЦЕНТРАЛЬНАЯ АЗИЯ: НОВЫЕ ГОРИЗОНТЫ ДЛЯ РАСШИРЕННОГО СОТРУДНИЧЕСТВА

Мурат Лаумулин, Асима Аубакир

Аннотация: В статье рассматривается роль Европейского Союза как стабильного и перспективного партнера для Центрально-азиатского региона на нынешнем этапе. Новая стратегия отношений между Евросоюзом и Центральной Азией, принятая в июне 2019 года с учетом глобальных изменений на международной арене, а также приоритетов стран региона в их отношениях с ЕС, является тому подтверждением. Ожидается, что обновленная политика ЕС по отношению к странам Центральной Азии позволит ему укрепить имеющееся сотрудничество и сфокусироваться на наиболее продуктивных проектах и, главное, модифицировать подходы и аспекты взаимодействия в целях выхода на более качественный формат взаимодействия. Актуальность данной работы обусловлена необходимостью комплексного изучения основных направлений и инструментов политики Европейского Союза в отношении стран Центральной Азии. При этом основной задачей в работе является определение возможностей и перспектив реализации новой Стратегии ЕС по Центральной Азии.

Ключевые слова: Европейский Союз, Центральная Азия, новая Стратегия ЕС по Центральной Азии, сотрудничество, взаимосвязанность, партнерство во имя устойчивости, партнерство во имя процветания, европейский зеленый курс.

Introduction

Against the background of the cardinal transformation of the previously existing balance of power observed in the modern system of international relations, the Central Asian region continues to remain in the focus of attention of the world's leading actors, one way or another striving not only to strengthen but also to further advance their positions in Central Asia. One of the largest and strategically important external actors for the Central Asian states is the European Union.

The EU policy in Central Asia, which was mainly based on the corresponding EU strategies in the region, went through several stages of its evolutionary development.

It is noteworthy that at each of these stages the EU faced the need to solve certain tasks related to both the development of priority areas of cooperation and the need to formally “coordinate” its actions in the region with the initiatives of other key players in the system of international relations operating in Central Asia and also the respective integration institutions.

Numerous works of both Kazakhstani and foreign researchers have been devoted to the study of the problems of European strategy in the region. It is well covered in the works of K. Bayzakova, M. Gubaidullina, E. Esenbaeva, J. Ibrashev, D. Kalieva, R. Kalieva, G. Kurganbaeva, M. Laumulin, T. Suleimenov, and G. Rakhmatulina.

A relatively new view of EU cooperation with the Central Asian countries and especially with the Republic of Kazakhstan is given in the works of R. Kurmanguzhin.

Among the works of Russian authors, the works of S. Yun, A. Kazantsev, I. Bolgova, D. Malyshev, I. Novikov should be noted.

The works of Western and Eastern specialists, in particular Svante E. Cornell, S. Frederick Starr, deserve a separate mention. K. O'Neill, J. Balsiger, S. D. VanDeveer, H. Milner, S. Golunov, L. F. Blanco, C. C. Cirrig,

G. Mostafa, S. Kay, T. Renard, O. L. Spaizer.

The purpose of this article is to consider the new EU Strategy for Central Asia, adopted in 2019 from the point of view of determining the place and role of the Central Asian countries in the foreign policy of the European Union, taking into account the ongoing global and regional processes.

Research methods

Among various research methods, which were used for this research, in parallel with logical methods, the following should be stressed. The method of content analysis allowed to highlight the key approaches and tools of the European Union in implementing its policy in Central Asia, as well as to conduct an analysis of some current and prospective joint projects. The above-mentioned method made it possible to study the content of individual strategic documents of the European Union concerning the region. The method of systematic and interdisciplinary analysis helped to identify and explore several aspects of the EU's policy in Central Asia, as well as to identify cause and effect links, number of new tendencies of interaction followed by conclusions. This method was also used for comparing the opinions of various researchers and the officials on a given topic.

Among the approaches that made up the methodological basis of this study, the method of expert assessments, statistical analysis, and forecasting should be noted.

Development and implementation of the new EU Strategy for Central Asia «EU and Central Asia: New Opportunities for a Stronger Partnership»

On May 15, 2019, the European Commission and the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy presented to the EU Council the Joint Communiqué “European Union and Central Asia: New Opportunities for a Stronger Partnership” [1], which became,

in fact, the new EU Strategy for Central Asia. This Communiqué entered into force on June 17, 2019, after the adoption of the relevant conclusions of the EU Council [2].

This document, which in fact became the third program document of the European Union towards Central Asia (the previous two - from 2002 and 2007), reflects the modern vision of the interaction between the two regions, and also takes into account the current geopolitical realities, changing needs and new opportunities of the countries of the Central Asian region. It lacks any specific thematic platforms, which confirms the desire to make the document flexible and leave the possibility of maintaining its relevance for a longer time.

The desire to use the newly opened opportunities in the region was a confirmation of the European side's recognition of the positive dynamics of interaction between the Central Asian countries and the European Union. This is the main idea behind its new policy document.

As a priority goal in the region, the European Union defines the Partnership for Sustainability, which envisages "increasing the ability of the Central Asian states to overcome various internal and external challenges, as well as successfully carry out reforms". The focus remains on issues of democracy, human rights, the rule of law, and gender equality.

The European Union expresses its intention to continue cooperation in the field of security, including in the field of border management, migration, combating illegal drug trafficking, extremism and terrorism, disarmament, and non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

"Partnership for Prosperity" is defined by the second area of interaction. It includes promoting the modernization of the economies of the region's countries, developing their sustainable interconnection

with each other and neighboring regions, as well as investing in the younger generation, mainly in educational projects.

Thus, the policy pursued by the Europeans in Central Asia was supplemented by the above elements but retained the basic model of interaction. It is important to note that today the European Union strives to take into account the specifics and priorities of each Central Asian country.

New policy innovation is the EU's focus on developing interconnectivity between Europe and Central Asia. In other words, the Europeans expect that regional cooperation will enable the Central Asian countries to better manage interdependence in order to strengthen their positions in the international format.

In addition, through Central Asia, the EU seeks to improve interaction with the countries of Southeast Asia, which correlates with another European strategy - the EU's Europe and Asia Connectivity Asia Strategy [3], published ahead of the Asia-Europe Forum Summit (ASEM) in September 2018.

European Policy Implementation Instruments in the Central Asian region

Separately, it is necessary to focus on the tools for the implementation of the Strategy, in which the key role is assigned to regional and bilateral programs financed within the 7-year budget cycles of the European Union. So, from 2014 to 2020, the budget for cooperation between the EU and Central Asia amounted to about 1.1 billion euros [4].

Most of the funds allocated for the Central Asian countries are intended for the implementation of regional projects involving two or more countries in the region. The rest of the funds are distributed among bilateral projects with Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.

The strategy is being implemented through the respective regional and bilateral

Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI) programs. It should be noted that due to the rather limited financial resources, the European Union strives to implement relatively low-cost projects that have practical benefits, rather than allocate grants for expensive projects, for example, infrastructure development.

In addition, support to the region is provided in the form of loans from the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the European Investment Bank, which to date have invested about 11 billion euros in the region.

Another support option is the blending of grant aid and borrowed funds. Such an EU investment facility for Central Asia has a universal application and is used to reduce the amount of capital that partner countries must raise to implement a project in Central Asia. It is noteworthy that in the period from 2010 to 2016, in a similar mixed format, the countries of the region received more than 1 billion euros, of which 143 million euros were grant aid (25 projects), and 970 million euros were loans [5].

To provide the European Commission more flexibility in planning its program activities, as well as to renew the right to implement bilateral development programs in Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, the European Union is currently working on the development of a new instrument of cooperation.

The new program document of the European Union also provides for the creation of new formats of cooperation at different levels. Today, the annual conferences of EU-CA foreign ministers and high-level EU-CA dialogues on political and security issues function effectively.

Along with this, it is planned to establish an informal platform - the "EU - Central Asia Forum" for closer interaction between civil societies, think tanks, and the business community. In July 2021, the First CA-EU Economic Forum is planned in Bishkek, at

which special attention will be paid to the promotion of innovative, energy, and resource-saving projects of a cross-border nature within the framework of a partnership in promoting a green economy [6]. It is assumed that such forums will be held on a rotating basis in the countries of Central Asia.

It must be admitted that the European Union is attentive to the proposals of the Central Asian countries for interaction, which is reflected in its program documents. In particular, the following Central Asian initiatives have found a place in the Strategy: the possibility of implementing trilateral projects in the EU-CA-Afghanistan format, holding working meetings between meetings of Ministerial Conferences and High-Level Dialogues, as well as virtual institutionalization of EU-CA cooperation through the establishment of an appropriate online portal [7].

The meeting of the author with a representative of the Central Asia Department of the European External Action Service (Brussels, March of 2020), who was directly involved in the preparation of the EU Strategy for Central Asia 2019, revealed the following thesis regarding EU's interaction with Central Asia. According to the European diplomat, the EU has no intention to compete with any other actor in the region, including China. The European Union can be just a third party and a "good partner" that is able to offer the Central Asian region an alternative between Russia and China.

Prospects for European Union cooperation and Central Asia through ongoing projects

Joining the Central Asian countries to the "European Green Deal", launched in December 2019 at the initiative of the European Union, could be another important area of cooperation. Under this initiative, the EU is committed to achieving carbon neutrality by 2050.

According to European experts, by 2050 a balance will be achieved between the volumes of emissions and absorption of greenhouse gases. At the same time, the natural capital of the EU will be protected and augmented, and economic growth will not depend solely on the use of resources. However, they also note that in order to achieve this goal, Europe needs close cooperation with international partners.

In this regard, the EU recognizes the growing potential of the Central Asian countries and draws attention to the significant challenges they face in working to improve the resilience of their national economies [8].

In January 2020, the European Union launched a new environmental integration project “Green Central Asia”, initiated by Germany [9]. This initiative, as part of the new EU Strategy for Central Asia, is designed to support a high-level dialogue on climate change issues in the context of ensuring the security and stability of the countries of the region. During his participation in the inauguration of this initiative in Berlin, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan Mukhtar Tleuberdi told his colleagues about the state policy in Kazakhstan in the field of green economy development and the activities of the International Center for Green Technologies [10].

According to the Head of European Diplomacy Josep Borrell, the fight against climate change is the highest priority for the EU’s partnership with the countries of Central Asia, since the region has been particularly hard hit by this issue.

The European diplomat notes that the European Union, unlike some other partners of Central Asian countries, can offer a truly regional and cross-border approach for solving problems in Central Asia. Having accumulated rich experience in this area, the EU is ready to share it [11].

In this direction, the European Union is working in the framework of the EU-CA

Platform for Cooperation in the Field of Environment and Water Resources and its Working Group on Environment and Climate Change (WGECC), which are supported by the EU-funded project on cooperation in the field of water resources and environment (WECOOP) [12].

Another important area of cooperation between the EU and Central Asia today is the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic. The countries of Central Asia did not stand aside from the negative processes in the socio-economic and political spheres caused by the coronavirus pandemic. And here, in the framework of the work carried out by the European Union to assist in this direction, it is necessary to note the assistance program “Central Asia COVID-19 Crisis Response” (CACCR), with a budget of 3 million euros.

The program was launched in July 2020 and is designed for two years. It should be noted that it is carried out within the framework of the “Solidarity Package” with a budget of 124 million euros, prepared by the European Union for the Central Asian region as part of the Team Europe global response to COVID-19.

This project, which is being implemented by the World Health Organization, provides support to mitigate the negative impacts caused by the coronavirus and create conditions for the sustainable development of health systems in the countries of the region by strengthening their capacity to respond to such threats in the future. Thus, according to the information of the Delegation of the European Union in the Republic of Kazakhstan, in order to better prepare for the fight against the pandemic, in addition to providing the necessary medicines and equipment, it is planned to provide assistance to medical institutions and laboratories.

In particular, the CACCR program has several stages. In the first phase, priority needs will be met, taking into account

existing national COVID-19 preparedness and response plans. Then, after the peak of the pandemic has passed, the focus will be on recovery and preparation for a possible next wave. In the final stage, in the long term, a number of activities are planned to create and maintain sustainable and effective health systems [13].

As another example of successful interaction between the EU and the Central Asian countries, it is necessary to note the program for training Afghan female students in higher educational institutions of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. It is noteworthy that Kazakhstan was the author of this concept in 2017.

The main coordinator of the project is UNDP with the assistance of UN-Women, the European Union is assigned the role of sponsor. Thus, the budget of the program at the start-up stage amounted to about 2 million euros.

This program (lasting 6 years – bachelor's and master's degrees), involves the training of at least 40 students from Afghanistan in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. At the same time, most of the students will study in Kazakhstan, taking into account the developed educational infrastructure. The main focus of studying in Kazakhstan will be on such specialties as applied statistics, agriculture, and mining. In Uzbekistan, it will mainly be agriculture.

The first group of 30 Afghan women arrived in Kazakhstan with an educational purpose on this project in October 2019 [14].

Conclusion

In its new program document in relation to Central Asia, the European Union reaffirmed the importance of the comprehensive development of cooperation with the Central Asian countries and the region, in general, reaffirming its intentions to promote its sustainable development and outlining the

priority areas of interaction at the interregional level.

It is expected that the European Union Strategy “EU and Central Asia: New Opportunities for a Stronger Partnership” will allow Europeans to flexibly adapt their policies within the framework of more specific development programs and other initiatives. At the same time, it should be understood that this framework document sets the EU member states a general tone of cooperation and does not give specific guidelines for promoting their national interests in the region. In this regard, the development of traditional cooperation between countries on a bilateral basis does not lose its relevance.

Taking into account the new relevant approaches and aspects of the Strategy, the effect of its implementation has yet to be assessed. It is obvious that the concentration of many priority areas in one document will set the European Union the task of using more resources than before. However, in connection with the changes taking place in the EU today against the background of the coronavirus pandemic, the weakening of the economy in this regard, migration and other problems, along with the strengthening of the role of Eurosceptic, the question arises whether the potential of the European Union will be sufficient to fully disclose and realize them.

In this article, the author tried to show the features of the new not yet fully formed EU Strategy for Central Asia (interaction instruments are still in the process of defining) and, in general, the prospects for the policy pursued by the European Union in the region through the prism of the key aspects of interaction developed by the European Union.

At the same time, it is obvious that taking into account the current global processes cooperation of the European Union with Central Asia can bring, in addition to practical benefits, political and image dividends. Thus,

effective cooperation with the region and the results achieved can be used as evidence of the effectiveness of European diplomacy for interaction with other regions. And the countries of Central Asia should not miss the opportunity to use such kind of intention, showing active interest and involvement at

the level of both the state and other formats of interaction.

The Central Asian countries are also interested in developing a strategic partnership with the European Union, which would meet new realities and new needs.

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BUILDING CLUSTER OBSERVATORY OF KAZAKHSTAN: A STEP TOWARDS ORGANIC CLUSTER POLICY

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Madina Kabdualiyeva *

Consultant at the Center for Research and Consulting,
MA in International Affairs
(Nur-Sultan, Kazakhstan)

Anuar Buranbayev

Partner, Center for Research and Consulting, MBA
(Nur-Sultan, Kazakhstan)

Abstract. Traded clusters are geographic concentrations of interrelated industries. While their positive effects are commonly agreed with, some governments still do not have a sound and structured cluster policy. Kazakhstan is not an exception. Introduced by the government in 2005, the notion of clusters has been largely misinterpreted, if compared to the universally accepted definition. The purpose of this paper is to identify the challenges in cluster policy formation in Kazakhstan and to offer recommendations on its improvement. Towards this goal, the article provides the evaluation of the government approach to traded clusters and presents a cluster observatory prototype based on the original methodology by Delgado, Porter, and Stern [16]. We argue that clusters must be redefined in the local policymaking, and that cluster observatory could be a major tool for addressing existing policy gaps. While the text is centered around Kazakhstan, its major findings could contribute to a broader group of countries.

Key words: *Industrial Clusters, Cluster Policy, Cluster Observatory*

* mad.kabdualiyeva@gmail.com

ҚАЗАҚСТАНДЫҚ КЛАСТЕРЛІК ОБСЕРВАТОРИЯ: ҮЙЛЕСІМДІ КЛАСТЕРЛІК САЯСАТТЫҢ ҚҰРЫЛЫСЫНДАҒЫ БІРІНШІ ҚАДАМ

Мадина Кабдуалиева, Әнуар Буранбаев

Аңдатпа. Өндірістік кластерлер - бұл өзара байланысты салалардың географиялық шоғырлануы. Кластерлердің оң әсерімен келіскеніне қарамастан, кейбір үкіметтерде әлі тұрақты кластерлік саясат жоқ. Қазақстан да ерекше жағдай емес. 2005 жылы енгізілген кластерлер ұғымы жалпыға бірдей қабылданған анықтамамен салыстырғанда маңызды ерекшеліктері бар. Осы мақаланың негізгі мақсаты - Қазақстандағы кластерлік саясатты қалыптастыруында қол жетімді қиындықтарды анықтау және оны жетілдіру бойынша ұсыныстар беру. Осы мақсатқа жету үшін мақала өндірістік кластерлерге мемлекеттік тәсілге бағасын және Дельгадо, Портер мен Штерн [16] түпнұсқа әдіснамасына негізделген кластерлік обсерватория прототипін ұсынады. Біз Қазақстандық кластерлік саясатты дамытуда бірінші кезекте кластерлерді қайтадан анықтау керек, ал кластерлік обсерватория саясаттағы бар олқылықтарды жоюдың негізгі құралы бола алады деп санаймыз. Мақаланың назары Қазақстан болғанымен, оның негізгі зерттеулері басқа елдердің кең тобына ықпал етуі мүмкін.

Түйін сөздер: өндірістік кластерлер, кластерлік саясат, кластерлік обсерватория

КЛАСТЕРНАЯ ОБСЕРВАТОРИЯ КАЗАХСТАНА: ПЕРВЫЙ ШАГ К ОРГАНИЧНОЙ КЛАСТЕРНОЙ ПОЛИТИКЕ

Мадина Кабдуалиева, Ануар Буранбаев

Аннотация. Торгуемые кластеры представляют собой географические концентрации взаимосвязанных отраслей. Несмотря на значительные положительные эффекты от развития кластеров, кластерная политика все еще не сформирована во многих странах. Казахстан не стал исключением. Введенное в 2005 году понятие кластеров было в значительной степени неверно истолковано в сравнении с общепринятым определением. Цель данной статьи - выявить проблемы в формировании кластерной политики в Казахстане и предложить рекомендации по ее построению. В этих целях в данной статье представлены анализ государственного подхода к торгуемым кластерам и прототип кластерной обсерватории, основанный на оригинальной методологии Дельгадо, Портера и Штерна [16]. Формирование местной политики требует пересмотра понятия и подходов к развитию кластеров, а кластерная обсерватория может стать основным инструментом для устранения существующих пробелов в кластерной политике. Несмотря на то, что в статье изложен кейс Казахстана, ее выводы могут найти более широкое применение при проведении исследований в других странах.

Ключевые слова: отраслевые кластеры, кластерная политика, кластерная обсерватория

Introduction

Viewing economic development through a prism of separate industries is obsolete. It deprives one of understanding the relations between industries and how they aggregate into value chains. For this reason, in recent decades both developed and developing countries are actively adopting the so-called cluster approach.

The concept of clusters was popularized by Michael Porter back in the 1990s. Stemming from the classic concept of economies of agglomeration [21], clusters were defined as “geographic concentrations of interconnected companies and institutions in a particular field” [23]. As multiple studies show, this approach remained majorly intact over the years [16] [22] [35]. However, the definition alone does not allow one to fully understand when a group of firms becomes a cluster [35]. Failing to distinguish the two may lead to the government investing in expensive yet abortive cluster initiatives. To address this drawback, various papers attempted to establish a clear set of cluster criteria [16] [26] [35]. There are five general characteristics.

First, clusters contain the firms from the so-called “traded industries” – those that “concentrate in particular regions but sell products or services across regions and countries” [32, p. 559]. Other industries called “local”, in contrast, are dispersed across the nation, with their size proportional to the region’s size [32, p. 559].

Second, firms in the cluster are geographically proximate [16]. Sharing a common location is important to establish business relations and to minimize transaction costs. This also means that while seeking for a “national cluster” could be tempting, it is unlikely for one to exist due to difficulties in communication that large distance usually implies.

Third, cluster members use similar inputs

in the production process [16]. They can be both tangible, such as raw materials, and intangible, such as labor force skills and technologies. Thus, related firms often have common suppliers and recruit specialists who graduated from certain universities.

Fourth, firms in a cluster target the same clients and markets, even if their goods are not perfect substitutes. They tend to face common challenges and seek similar services from the government. That is why clusters often have business associations, which help the entrepreneurs to accumulate more bargaining power and act as one [23].

Fifth, to form a cluster, firms should share the same identity. Work ethics and values driving the production of goods and services also help to establish connections [12]. As Morosini [25, p. 35] argues, members of industrial clusters form “social communities specializing in efficient knowledge creation and transfer” and tend to have a higher level of institutionalized trust and stronger personal interactions than businesses that are not in the cluster.

Notably, it is difficult to develop relations among firms artificially. Successful clusters seem to have emerge as a result of a continuous accumulation of competences in the region [35]. However, once these links are established, some clear positive effects might be observed. For instance, the European traded clusters offer average wages that are 14% higher than in other locations, as well as they host 77% more high-growth firms [24, pp. 5-6]. The regions with strong clusters also have shown higher resilience through economic crises and managed to develop stronger international linkages due to a high level of specialization [12].

They are also more innovative: the nature of interactions happening within the cluster makes the Triple Helix Model work [20]. Even if certain industries start to decline, locations with strong clusters are quicker to

adapt to new activities [15] [35] and often have an auspicious environment for startups [26]. Thus, being in a cluster may outweigh the weaknesses of young enterprises: the companies which are smaller, but are closely located and interact with each other, may eventually outperform multinational companies that chose to develop on their own [25, p. 305].

However, while there is little doubt that clusters can positively contribute to national and regional competitiveness, cluster policy development seems to be a prerogative of developed countries. To date, the US and the EU are still the nuclei of cluster initiatives, with Canada and India following in their footsteps.

Other developing states, however, tend to have more modest results in this field. Kazakhstan, which is studied in this paper, is a good example of a country that still cannot transition successfully from traditional post-soviet approach to industrial development. Notwithstanding the attempts to switch to cluster approach in the early 2000s, the local government did not manage to develop a sound policy yet. Also, unlike to its Western counterparts, Kazakhstan has no working cluster observatory – an important tool that helps to systematically track and measure cluster development across various locations by narrowing industries into clusters based on links outlined above [18, pp. 17-18]. Neglecting such an instrument puts the state at risk of having an outdated and inefficient cluster policy.

This paper argues that the existing approaches to cluster policy in Kazakhstan must be reimaged and that it could be done by the means of cluster observatory. Considering the demand for building a new economic development model, this is a critical moment to summarize all the lessons learnt and design a new cluster policy approach. Towards this goal, the paper presents major

fallacies in developing cluster policy and suggests a working algorithm for building its own cluster observatory. Structure-wise the article consists of three sections. The first section provides an overview of the current cluster policy in Kazakhstan based on various sources. The second section focuses on the methodology of building a local cluster observatory, as an instrument to improving Kazakhstani cluster policy. The final section outlines key recommendations for further development of the Kazakhstani cluster policy.

Literature review

To understand the place of clusters in the Kazakhstani public policy, it was important to study both the conceptual framework (how are clusters defined?) and plan of action (how are clusters developed?). Towards this goal, three types of literature were analyzed.

First, the State of the nation addresses (hereinafter – addresses). Delivered annually in the form of a public speech, they depict the results achieved the last year and highlight the President's top priorities for the next one. As of the current structure of the state planning system, the objectives set in the addresses also affect the work of the government. Akin to many former Soviet republics, in Kazakhstan, the president has an ultimate power of defining the direction of the whole central apparatus and even local authorities. His vision and perception of clusters are expected to lie in a very basis of the Kazakhstani cluster policy.

Second, documents of the government. These are the documents included in the state planning system, such as programs, strategies, plans, and forecasts, encapsulating precise initiatives that government undertakes to reach the development goals. The government documents were analyzed to evaluate the methodological framework that guided cluster policy and initiatives that were put into action.

Third, local academic literature and media. Scientific articles and analytical reviews, interviews and blogs represent the opinions of those working outside of the government, which could show an alternative perspective on the topic of discussion.

Since the notion of clusters is not new to Kazakhstan, the literature review covered the period of 15 years. This time frame was especially helpful as it captured the terms served by two presidents and six different governments, showing the whole spectrum of approaches to cluster policy.

Clusters in the State of the nation addresses. First mentioned in 2005's State of the nation address, clusters were claimed as one of the competitiveness driving forces [10]. While the address opened a discussion about the importance of developing clusters and formed a basis for the first initiatives in this field, it did not provide a clear definition. The speech listed seven clusters that were chosen as a top priority. The reasoning for the choice made was not provided.

The lack of proper justification might explain missing a consistency in the approach to cluster development in the following addresses. Seven clusters declared in 2005 would never appear in the President's narrative again. In 2006, the head of state switched his rhetoric to the development of new "medical" and "innovative" clusters to be built in Astana (present-day Nur-Sultan) and Almaty [9]. These two clusters would later be mentioned in several addresses, sometimes complemented with "tourism", "cultural", and "intellectual" clusters. Yet the composition of each of them remained unexplained. Most importantly, in 7 out of 16 reviewed addresses cluster development was not mentioned as a part of economic policy [5] [6] [7] [33] [34] [37] [38]. The address made in 2012, which laid the foundation for the "Kazakhstan 2050" long-term strategy, barely mentioned clusters, narrowing them

down to the knowledge and innovations sphere [2].

Thus, the State of the nation addresses show two major things. First, the understanding of clusters was unrefined from the very start and remained uncorrected throughout the period studied. Declaring seven clusters that should be developed made an impression of clusters being something that can be controlled and created from scratch. As has been discussed earlier, this approach is fundamentally contradictory to the way clusters develop. The Kazakhstani government preserved its Soviet approach in picking national champions, rejecting the ancillary role that authorities should play in cluster development. Second, it is difficult to infer the role of clusters in the President's agenda. The consecutive exclusion of clusters from state addresses points to the lack of a clear vision on how cluster policy would unfold during the presidential term. Due to the key role played by the head of state in the Kazakhstani politics, this could serve as a significant impediment to forming a cluster policy by sending a signal of clusters being just a buzzword rather than a significant element of the national and regional development.

Clusters in the documents of the government. The legal information system of regulatory acts of the Republic of Kazakhstan contains nearly 900 various clusters-related documents that include provisions, projects, strategies, orders, annexes, commentaries etc. Most of them are not formally included into the state planning system, which diminishes the impact they may potentially exert. Moreover, regardless of such a voluminous framework, it is immensely fractured, sophisticating the understanding of the state cluster policy.

Considering the novelty of clusters both to public officials and business in 2005, it was crucial to set a list of criteria that helped to identify clusters and to design an algorithm

for their development. However, as the analysis of the main government documents shows, these objectives were not met. There were two major problems accompanying local cluster policy development.

First, the whole process was sporadic and disorganized. In total, the government took four big attempts to foster cluster development. The first one came as a response to 2005's State of the nation address when seven plans of cluster development were introduced. While it was the responsibility of the government to fill the methodological gap, it failed to introduce the definition of clusters into the state apparatus. Once the narrative switched from these seven clusters, they were put behind. As a result, seven plans have neither been executed nor abolished. Today, their current status is still unclear, yet there was no evidence that the government spends any resources from state budget towards their realization.

The second attempt was taken eight years later, in 2013, when the government developed the Concept of prospective national clusters formation. Instead of elaborating the 2005's initiative, this document proposed a new set of six clusters that should have been developed. The Concept, however, did not eventually turn into a full-fledged state program. The real changes did not happen, and uncertainty regarding clusters, their characteristics and functions remained.

The third attempt to build a cluster policy took place in 2014 when the state program of industrial and innovative development for 2015-2019 was developed. Commonly this period is thought of as the "official birth" of cluster policy in Kazakhstan. Unlike its antecedents, the program outlined the need for developing a methodology for identifying and evaluating clusters. At the same time, with no proper methodological

framework, the program still included cluster development as a part of the start-up development initiative.

The fourth and most recent attempt was taken along with the development of the next five-year state program of industrial and innovative development. As promised, it declared the introduction of cluster methodology elaborated by the World Bank and a group of local experts from the Ministry of Industrial and Innovative Development and the Center of Industry and Export *QazIndustry*. However, it was neither described within the program nor fully explained in available open sources [19]. Practically, it did not leave a space for evaluating the objectivity of the cluster framework and an opportunity to offer any feedback on its further improvement. In contrast, cluster methodologies elaborated in the US and the EU are a subject of public discussion and constant improvement. Holding on the previous version, the new program presented additional initiatives dedicated to the development of human resources, technologies, and infrastructure. While all of them could be reasonable for cluster development, they again demonstrated the preservation of a top-down approach in the local cluster policy.

The second problem with cluster policy was that it did not manage to become omnipresent. The Ministry of Industrial and Innovative Development (hereinafter – the Ministry) was the major organization on a central level in charge of the cluster initiative and the development of the cognominal state program. For this reason, it would have been hard to realize cluster initiatives that were not directly related to the functions of the Ministry. This could be the reason why other strategic documents either do not have concerted view on cluster development (such

⁸ The acting state programs of education, healthcare, employment, agriculture, infrastructure, digital and regional development were reviewed.

as the forecasting scheme of territorial and spatial development and the state program of tourism development) or did not include any cluster-related initiatives at all (such as national 5-year strategic plan and other state programs⁸).

As a result, cluster policy was significantly narrowed down. Confined with its own duties, the Ministry tailored clusters to a whole sector (tourism and pharmaceuticals), specific product or service (milk, meat, and flour), and even the organizations (Nazarbayev University and Innovative Technologies Park). This approach was both confusing in terms of the cluster scale and kept most traded industries out of cluster policy scope. It also presented cluster development as a temporary project of 5 years only undermining its core idea of being a stable ecosystem of firms and institutions [23]. The omissions of the central government could be potentially resolved by the local governments. However, it was not the case for Kazakhstan, where local executive bodies stand on the very bottom of the state hierarchy and must obey the framework set by the central apparatus.

In such a situation, another puzzle to solve is why none of the Kazakhstani governments did not manage to succeed at developing a cluster policy. The analysis by Bailey and Montalbano [22] provides four possible answers. First, seeking for a prestige – developing policy without gaining deep understanding first, just to raise a popularity of policymakers in office. Second, picking winners top-down – ignoring the judgments of business and expert community. Third, lack of competence – not having enough information and skills to create an adequate policy. Fourth, capture – pursuing personal goals in case of overlapping interests of the government officials and beneficiaries of cluster initiatives. In the case of Kazakhstan most of these problems could

have been true. Yet to understand the roots of this inconsistency, a deeper research of legislature and state planning system is required.

Therefore, the analysis of government documents diagnoses the lack of universally accepted cluster policy in Kazakhstan. Despite numerous trials to launch cluster development, it is difficult to articulate the goals and objectives the government wants to pursue. Without accepting common definitions and ensuring their presence in all types of government documents, it would be difficult to foresee the future of clusters in Kazakhstan.

Clusters in local academic works and media. The issue of cluster misinterpretation and cluster policy overall is not much addressed by local expert communities. The amount of academic works on clusters in Kazakhstan is rather scarce. The media content is also limited: news releases are rare and paraphrase the information outlined in the government documents.

The Kazakhstani articles present in open access have one common trend – they focus on reviewing classic works in the field, without contextualizing it. There was also no paper found that attempted to develop the cluster observatory. The reports by international development institutions tend to follow the framework given in the government documents and do not challenge the methodological basis. Some national and foreign experts attempted to suggest quantifiable criteria of clusters, but none of them managed to provide a reasonable justification for their choice.

Considering the existing literature gap and flaws in the current government approach to clusters, a new perspective is needed. The next section addresses these challenges by suggesting using cluster observatory as a basis for new cluster policy development in Kazakhstan.

Methodology

The role of cluster observatory in cluster policy formation is hard to overestimate. Not only this instrument is handy in methodizing the knowledge about clusters and their characteristics, but also in monitoring the changes clusters undergo on a certain territory. The observatory is usually presented as an online interactive platform, open to everyone.

The attempts to introduce cluster observatory started in the early 2000s, but its full-working version was launched around a decade ago, followed by revolutionizing paper by Delgado, Porter, and Stern on cluster mapping approaches. Their methodology was universally accepted as the underlying algorithm of cluster observatory development. Subsequently, more and more countries adopted it to shape their own cluster policy, including the EU members, Canada, Russia, and India.

In the case of Kazakhstan, cluster observatory is also an important instrument to use for at least three reasons. First, it will help to untangle confusion about clusters and their composition. Having all data about clusters concentrated on a single platform will make it easier for policymakers to understand the whole concept and make them follow clear quantifiable criteria that define clusters. Second, it will contribute to switching to a more organic approach in policymaking. Instead of picking the clusters to develop, with cluster observatory, the government will be able to monitor which ones are naturally growing faster or slower and undertake more specific initiatives to help them develop. Third, it will assist business in evaluating available opportunities in various regions across different clusters. As a result, it may decrease the costs an establishment must incur to research the market and potential partners.

To build a cluster observatory, it is necessary to follow the algorithm, to avoid excessive subjectivity in defining clusters and mapping them. Due to its wide recognition, the methodology by Delgado, Porter, and Stern [16] was used as a benchmark. It highlights three essential processes standing behind the development of a cluster observatory: defining the territorial unit for the analysis, grouping industries into clusters, and choosing cluster performance indicators to measure their development level.

The first step depends on national approaches to territorial analysis. As Weiser and Kaibitsch [26, p. 9] show, “there is no universally accepted way of establishing the exact boundaries of a cluster. What is perceived as close in one location may represent an insurmountable distance in others; distance can be influenced by the availability of transport facilities, as well as by cultural identity and social values”. For example, the US cluster observatory provides information on three geographic levels (states, economic zones, and counties), and the European one is based solely on administrative units (regions and cities). Regardless of the approach, it is important to verify the connectivity within the territorial unit. It is usually measured with commuting rates⁹. In the case of Kazakhstan, however, it is impossible to measure these links among various locations due to a lack of data. For this reason, the Kazakhstani cluster observatory, akin to the one of the EU, will use administrative areas as territorial units for analysis. To date, there are 203 administrative areas in Kazakhstan, comprising regions and cities.

The second step is the most difficult to perform. Practically, the only country that has made cluster classification completely on its own is the US. Other countries build their observatories on the US cluster classification. It takes place due to two big limitations. First,

⁹ Measured as share of people regularly traveling from one location to another for work or studies

the data on industries available in the US is more detailed which allows a higher level of precision in categorizing them into clusters. Having a classification that is built on a large-scale data will be of no use. Second, the US economy is more integrated and mature. Developing economies, in contrast, could simply have not developed inter-industrial links yet. This is also a case for Kazakhstan, which has two big cities of Nur-Sultan and Almaty. Since both cities played an important historical role in the country development (both were capital cities at different times), they concentrated large portions of workforce and establishments. The size of other administrative areas, in contrast, is much smaller, which will not allow seeing a trend needed to identify the borders of each cluster.

To cope with these imperfections, it would be reasonable for Kazakhstan to adopt the cluster classification that has been already developed and tested. The European one is the most relevant to the Kazakhstani context. Since the EU cluster observatory itself is based on the US one, it ensures the accurate application of the original methodology [16], including the division of industries into traded and local groups, which requires the data that is not collected in Kazakhstan. Also, both Kazakhstan and the EU share the same industry classification system (NACE REV 2), which allows a smoother transfer of cluster classification to the context of Kazakhstan and conducting a comparative analysis with its member countries. Thus, for the Kazakhstani cluster observatory, the classification of 51 traded clusters of the EU would be used [13].

The final step of building a cluster observatory is more flexible in execution and allows using available data without a significant decrease in accuracy. While cluster classification allows differentiating the

industries by their connections, it alone is not sufficient to measure cluster development. It is necessary to use some quantifiable indicators to see how different clusters perform in different regions.

Unlike cluster classification, performance indicators are more diversified across existing cluster observatories. To ensure consistency, the EU method of measuring cluster development was analyzed first. The EU observatory offers “cluster strength” as a key performance indicator. The strength is based on five criteria: cluster size, specialization, employee productivity, SME performance, and innovation leaders [18]. Considering data limitations, for Kazakhstan, it is possible to use only size and specialization criteria. The former is measured with the employment size, while the latter is based on location quotient calculations. The benchmark values for both criteria are also taken from the European cluster observatory. Using these measures combined provides a good balance: while the former shows the absolute size of a cluster, the latter compares a certain region size to other regions and Europe.

To increase the versatility and reliability of performance measures, this paper suggests two additional factors: integrity and concentration. Cluster integrity is the share of industries that belong to this cluster according to the adopted classification that is already present in this administrative area. This indicator serves as a proxy for diversification. It allows seeing whether the whole value chain of this cluster has been already formed or there is still a potential for this cluster to spread out.

Cluster concentration is the value of the Herfindahl-Hirschman Index¹⁰ for a particular cluster. It shows the dependency of the cluster on one or a few industries and serves as a proxy for sustainability. The lower the value – the higher the sustainability of

¹⁰ Measured as a sum of squares of employment shares of each industry in the cluster

the cluster. This measure can also address the main limitation of specialization criteria – location quotients can be misleading if their high value is caused by a single large firm and not a group of firms. In the Kazakhstani context, where many cities were built in the Soviet period around one big factory or enterprise, this indicator is of a particular importance to apply.

Based on the EU cluster classification and three cluster development criteria (strength, integrity, and concentration), the cluster observatory of Kazakhstan was developed. In total, it shows how many clusters each of 203 administrative areas has, as well as at what stage of development this cluster is. At the moment of writing, the observatory offers around 20 functions that can be used for building a cluster policy.

Research results

Using the observatory, it would be easy to evaluate an overall state of cluster development in Kazakhstan in a short period. Applying the EU cluster classification to 203 administrative areas gives information on around 5,600 cluster-area pairs. While the performance indicators of these pairs differ drastically, it shows that the Kazakhstani economy has already developed at least the rudiments of clusters.

Yet there is only one cluster in Kazakhstan – the Business Services in Almaty – that satisfies all criteria of a developed cluster. This is another evidence for an unsuccessful approach to cluster development that existed to date. More promising picture appears if one tries to evaluate the performance of the Kazakhstani clusters with the strength criteria only. Suggested observatory identified 97 strong clusters spread around in 41 different locations, most of which are cities. They contain around 850 thousand employees or 38% of total employment in traded industries. Diversity of strong clusters, if

analyzed by their type, is not wide: one-third of strong clusters are production and transmission of electricity, metal mining and production and transmission of oil gas. The half of clusters constituting the classification are strong in none of the administrative areas studied.

To give a practical example of cluster observatory capacities, a summary of all Business Services clusters in the country is provided in Table 1. The information is accumulated under five sections. The first one – cluster composition – gives an overview of which particular industries share the links among each other and tend to form a cluster. The second section outlines the list of clusters that relate to Business Services. This information would be crucial in understanding the links of a higher scale – the ones formed among groups of industries. Based on that, it would be easier to estimate which cluster has the highest chance to appear after the Business Services one develops. The information under “strong cluster locations” and “potential cluster locations” tabs denote specific regions that have already succeeded in the Business Services to a certain extent. The final section suggests several cases from international practice that could be worth studying in designing Business Services cluster strategy. Yet it is vital to apply this experience with caution – there is no universal recipe on how a cluster can be developed, and the context matters.

At the same time, it is important to understand the limits of cluster observatory. To keep it updated, further research is needed. As the quality of statistical data improves, it may be useful to modify the indicators used to measure cluster development or to redefine the basic territorial unit used for this analysis.

This instrument is also short of any forecasting methods. The proven geographic agglomeration of enterprises does not

Table 1. Business Services clusters

Cluster composition	Business Services is one of the most diversified clusters. In total, it may contain up to 21 industries, starting from taxi operations and management to computer programming and architectural activities.
Related clusters	The Business Services cluster has connections with nine other clusters, most of the links being quite strong. The clusters related to Business services are (1) Distribution and Electronic Commerce, (2) Marketing, Design and Publishing, (3) Insurance Services, (4) Education and Knowledge Creation, (5) Communications Equipment and Services, (6) Financial Services, (7) Performing Arts, (8) Biopharmaceuticals and (9) Printing Services. The first five have the highest chance of being developed in locations where the Business Services cluster exists.
Strong cluster locations	The cluster is already strong in four cities: Nur-Sultan, Almaty, Aktau, and Atyrau. In total, these cities employ 240 thousand workers in 23 thousand establishments. The city of Almaty has both strong and low-concentrated cluster, while other three cities may need to decrease their dependency on a small number of industries to increase the sustainability and resilience of their Business Services cluster.
Potential cluster locations	There are 64 locations that satisfy at least one criteria of cluster strength. Among them, four cities have the highest potential to develop Business services: Aktobe, Karaganda, Shymkent, and Ust-Kamenogorsk. To become strong clusters, they need to get a higher local quotient value, i.e. to become more specialized than other regions. Akin to Almaty, Shymkent also has a more balanced structure than others in terms of concentration. It may be expected that these cities will be the next growth poles of Business Services in the country.
Best practices	There are abundant examples of successful Business Services clusters in both Europe (Antwerp, Upper Bavaria, Darmstadt, Koln, Hovedstaden, Nord-Pas-de-Calais, Pays de la Loire, Oslo, London, etc.), and the USA (San Jose, Denver, Minneapolis, Detroit, Washington DC, San Louis, Atlanta, and Houston).

guarantee all positive spillover effects to emerge. The observatory also does not provide recommendations on what kind of help certain areas may need to develop their clusters. Thus, the use of other methods, both quantitative and qualitative should not be neglected. At some point, it might be unavoidable to conduct surveys and interviews to identify the problems of cluster development.

Discussion

Based on the regulatory analysis and possibilities coming with the introduction of the cluster observatory, there are four streams of policy recommendations.

First, the unanimous definition and characteristics of clusters in all kinds of government documents must be introduced. This will ensure consistency of the cluster policy and narrow down the space for interpretation. It is recommended to utilize

the original definition by Porter [23], which is also adopted in policies of other countries. Otherwise, it would be difficult to conduct a comparative analysis.

Second, the government should develop a list of principles guiding the behavior of policymakers responsible for cluster policy. Porter [23] outlined the most basic ones: enforcing a regulatory environment that is conducive to the development of linkages among business, focusing on specialized factor creation, and resisting the temptation to intervene in factor and currency markets. All these principles require the government to step back and loosen a grip on cluster development.

Third, considering limited resources, policymakers should focus on existing clusters and not create new ones. Here is the main stage when cluster observatory can be used. It will allow replacing the conservative

top-down with a more organic bottom-up approach, where government reacts to the changes in clusters, and not vice versa. Under this framework, inaction is also a way of impact.

Fourth, the government must evaluate what kind of initiatives would better serve cluster development. They should go in line with adopted principles and consider diverging levels of cluster performance across the country. Donahue, Parilla, and McDearman [35, p. 4] suggest five areas of intervention. First, information and networks – making the information about opportunities for business universally accessible. Second, talent development – elaborating education policy in schools and colleges to prepare professionals with relevant skills. Third, research and commercialization – serving as an intermediary between business and research groups to establish partnerships. Fourth, infrastructure – building logistics facilities or providing a high-speed broadband connection. Fifth, capital access – compiling the data about young firms and opening it to potential investors. Regardless of the number of initiatives the government would choose to pursue, it is also important to consider them when planning the state budget. Otherwise, their effect might be reduced.

Conclusion

In the globalized world, cluster development is a proven method of raising both national and regional competitiveness. Seeking to shape the approaches for cluster policy development in Kazakhstan, this paper contributes to the larger body of literature in two ways.

First, it sheds a light on major clots that prevent cluster policy development. The case of Kazakhstan is illustrative of two major barriers to an efficient cluster policy: the lack of clear definitions and methods to estimate the performance of clusters. Moreover, while in foreign literature cluster observatory is presented as a useful instrument to track cluster development, this paper shows the perspective of how it can help to address basic policy fallacies.

Second, it proposes two extra measures of cluster development, such as integrity and concentration that can be calculated even with limited data. While the methodology developed by Delgado, Porter and Stern [16] is universally accepted, the research communities of developing countries also must strive to improve it considering the context of their nations. Whereas the focus of the article was the case of Kazakhstan, the findings outlined in this paper can also be valid to other developing countries, especially to the former Soviet republics.

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Address and contact phone numbers of KazISS:

Republic of Kazakhstan, 010000

Nur-Sultan, Beibitshilik st., 4

Tel .: +7 (7172) 75-20-20

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