

Kazakhstan and European Union: New Tendencies, Priorities and Prospects

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KEYWORDS Central Asia. Cooperation. European Union Energy. Policy. Republic of Kazakhstan. Strategy Security

ABSTRACT The purpose of this work is to study the problems of strategic cooperation between the Republic of Kazakhstan and the EU, which is characterized by new challenges and threats - the global financial and economic crisis, international terrorism, trans-national crime and illegal migration. In this paper authors have identified the role of Kazakhstan in the policies of the EU; the peculiarities of relations between the Republic of Kazakhstan and the EU; analyzed the results of the Strategy for a New Partnership of the EU and CA for the period from 2007 to 2013 and identified negative factors influencing the effectiveness of the EU policy towards Kazakhstan and other CA states. Based on the analysis of concepts, ideas and scientific approaches developed by scientists, in respect of cooperation between the EU and CA, documentary sources have developed proposals for improving the efficiency of interaction between Kazakhstan and the EU.

INTRODUCTION

The modern period of the strategic cooperation between the Republic of Kazakhstan and the European Union requires in-depth analysis and revision of a number of positions, which is caused by several factors.

Firstly, necessity to jointly overcome new challenges and threats. The President of the Republic of Kazakhstan Nazarbayev, noted this in his recent message to the nation "Nurlyzhol - Way of the Future" on November 11, 2014 "Today the whole world is faced with new challenges and threats. The world economy has not recovered from the effects of the global financial and economic crisis. Restoration is going very slow with uncertain pace, and somewhere it is still declining. Geopolitical crisis and the sanctions policy of major powers create additional obstacles to the recovery of the world economy" (2014).

Secondly, the mutual interest of both Kazakhstan and the European Union in the long-term political and economic strategy partnerships.

Thirdly, the absence of significant tangible results in the implementation of the Strategy for a new partnership between the European Union and Central Asia for the period of 2007 to 2013 (2007). As Central Asian states experts noted, "This strategy strongly torn off from the realities and needs of the region. And precisely because of this its implementation is largely inef-

fective, incomplete and fragmented" (Chebotarev 2013). The EU Central Asia Strategy seems ambitious, given that member state activities suggest only a marginal interest in the region, an area that is not a geopolitical priority for Europe. The EU will need to carefully balance limited interests and resources with a few achievable long-term objectives. In 2012, the EU's review of its Central Asia strategy was heavily focused on the impact of Afghanistan on Central Asia. Today, the bearing of the situation in Afghanistan is less central to Brussels-based policy-makers than the impact of the Ukraine crisis and EU-Russia relations on Central Asia, whereas all these imply important developments that need to be assessed. The EU should focus on long-term priorities rather than solely focusing on contemporary issues (Boonstra 2015). More optimistic projections were expressed by the European experts who believe that, "strategy assisted in establishing a solid foundation for the work of the EU in the region (Central Asia). The strategy should be updated" (2012).

The problem of relations between Kazakhstan and the European Union was studied in a number of scientific papers (Sultangalieva 2013; Bhavna 2007; Ferrero-Waldner 2006), which certainly reflects the urgency of this issue.

The aim of this study is to identify the strategic mistakes in policy of the European Union towards Kazakhstan and other Central Asian states and the development of proposals to im-

prove cooperation between Kazakhstan and the European Union. The objectives of the study are:

- ♦ Define the role, place and importance of Kazakhstan in the policies of the European Union;
- ♦ reveal specificity of relations between the Republic of Kazakhstan and the European Union;
- ♦ Analyze the results of the Strategy for a New Partnership of the European Union and Central Asia for the period of 2007 to 2013;
- ♦ Identify the negative factors influencing the effectiveness of the European Union policy towards Kazakhstan and other Central Asian states;
- ♦ Develop proposals for improving cooperation between Kazakhstan and the European Union.

The methodological basis of the study were concepts, ideas and scientific approaches developed by historians, political scientists, philosophers over the last ten years, in respect to the cooperation between the European Union and Central Asia.

METHODOLOGY

The paper widely used the following methods of scientific analysis: historical and analytical method, comparisons, logical method, modeling and predicting method.

Comparative research method will compare and evaluate different positions of the European Union and Central Asia, and other countries on topical issues of cooperation between Kazakhstan and the European Union.

The use of historical and analytical methods allowed us to study the formation of the policy of framework with the European Union as a whole and the formation of the policy framework in respect of Kazakhstan.

The logical method was allowed to identify the motivation, goal and objectives of European Union policy towards Kazakhstan.

Due to the use of methods of modeling and forecasting, recommendations were developed to improve the interaction between Kazakhstan and the European Union.

OBSERVATIONS AND DISCUSSION

Kazakhstan along with the other Central Asian states is concentrating on close political,

military, cultural, spiritual, economic and other contacts in the history of many nations. Kazakhstan represents a bridge between Europe and Asia. In view of the situation, Kazakhstan and other Central Asian states have particular interest to the European Union. However, some scientists dispute this position. Thus, Sultangalieva believes that Central Asia is not particularly of interest for the European Union. Its policy goes essentially in the fairway with US policy in the region. European interests are focused on the production and transportation of energy/mineral resources (Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan) and the promotion of European trade brands. Further indication show that the balance of trade and economic relations between the EU and Central Asia is not in favor of the last one. The share of Central Asia in Europe is 0.2 percent, while the share of the European Union in the region much more - about 20 percent (2013). Researchers do not agree with this statement, as the analysis of foreign publications shows us the achievements of Kazakhstan, which testify to its appeal for further cooperation:

Kazakhstan is significantly ahead of its Central Asian neighbors on the standard of living of the population;

- ♦ Europeans hope to match aspirations of Nazarbayev to keep stability and to maintain the image of the country (Bhavna 2007);
- ♦ Kazakhstan acts as the “undisputed leader in the Central Asia in maintaining regional stability and promoting regional cooperation” (Ferrero-Waldner 2006);
- ♦ Kazakhstan continues to emphasize its Eurasian status through geographical, historical and ethno-cultural ties with Europe, and a desire to play a greater role in the club of nations of the West, based on its size and economic potential;
- ♦ Foreign policy position of Nazarbayev is firm, as he is supported by Russia, USA and the EU. On the one hand, as a member of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline, he considers USA as a partner in the region. On the other, as one of the initiators of the Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEC), Nazarbayev does not doubt on the alliance with Russia. EU needs considerable support of Kazakhstan in relation to the TRACECA project and the route Odessa-Brody-Plock;

- Pragmatic policy leads Kazakhstan to balancing between China, Russia and the West; increased number of people gets educated in the West, which promotes multilateral contacts with the West as said in the EU Strategy for Central Asia (2007).

Importance of Kazakhstan to the European partners was indicated by Benita Ferrero-Waldner: "Kazakhstan is an important partner for the EU in Central Asia. Researchers support democratic and economic reforms, strengthen cooperation in the field of energy, based on our well-developed trade relations, and looking for new ways to jointly promote regional stability in Central Asia" (2006).

The interest of the European Union in cooperation with Kazakhstan and other Central Asian states manifested in a number of strategic initiatives.

In recent years, "neighborhood policy" doctrine is applied to the post-Soviet space. The figurative expression of the EU Commissioner for External Relations and European Neighborhood Policy, Benita Ferrero-Waldner, "Central Asia - is the neighbors of our neighbors" (Ferrero-Waldner 2006) quickly became political and diplomatic expression

Relations between the EU and Central Asian countries are developing under the influence of four main factors:

- ♦ Further enlargement of the EU to the East;
- ♦ The spread of EU influence in the post-Soviet states in Eastern Europe;
- ♦ Conduct common European foreign policy and security policy.
- ♦ The overall process of implementation of the EU Strategy for Central Asia has revealed another aspect of the above dilemmas East-West: geopolitical maneuvering has been demonstrated not only in the newly independent states, but also by the European Union. At the same time, output of the EU in the Central Asia region is interested due to its strategic location, to gain access to oil and gas resources of the region and the Caspian Sea. In this regard, the geopolitical dimension of the EU strategy was particularly evident and even more dramatized the competition between the Euro-Asian and Euro-Atlantic geopolitical projects (Tolipov 2015).

In terms of safety Central Asia for the EU - one of the elements of a wider geostrategic com-

plex, including Russia, South Asia, as well as other global issues: terrorism, weapons of mass destruction, international crime and drugs.

Partnership Strategy of the European Union and Central Asia covered only the period from 2007 to 2013 and its main objectives were to achieve stability and prosperity in the region. The main directions of the strategy were to protect human rights, democratization, investment in education, promotion of economic development, strengthening energy and transport links, stability of the environment and the fight against common threats and challenges (2007).

In the researchers' opinion, the results of this strategy are not impressive for several reasons.

Firstly, the "European arrogance", which does not allow European states to evaluate the potential of Kazakhstan as an equal partner. For Europeans, except for politicians and economists, Kazakhstan remains little known and virtually unknown in relation to their potential. "For a long time countries in the region (Central Asian) were considered by Europeans as a white spot on the map" (2014). So far, in the view of Europeans, Kazakhstan is not perceived as an independent state, and either identified with the former Soviet Union, or Russia, or assessed as a less civilized state, either Europeans are not aware of its existence at all.

According to the Europeans, perception of Kazakhstan as a developing Asian country for a long time was outside of the European values, which puts Kazakhstan in the eyes of European scientists and politicians to a lower level of European countries. However, the value system of Kazakhstan, has some specific features, not much different from European values. In the Republic of Kazakhstan fundamental rights and freedoms, equal rights of all before the law and the rule of law are constitutionally protected. These values (the right to know their rights and act in accordance with them, to participate in free and fair elections, in a fair and public trial if charged with an offense, to own property alone or in association with others, to enjoy economic, social and cultural rights) were declared at the constitutional level, even in the Soviet Union, therefore statements that these international standards have been adopted recently would be wrong. In different historical periods, some rights of citizens of the Soviet Union were limited, for example, after the October Revolution, right to freedom of conscience and religion were limited,

during the “Cold War” - the right to freedom of movement, the right to exercise individual enterprise, etc. However, such restrictions have been eliminated in the sovereign Kazakhstan.

The system of values of Kazakhstan has some specificity due to remaining in the Kazakh society of Eastern traditions manifested in the priority of social values over the individual, respect for parents and elders, patriotism, social support system in need-based relationship, communities and the Muslim religion.

“European arrogance” pronounced in an attempt of the European Union to establish in Kazakhstan its parameters of education and science, which are considered to be the best in Europe. Thus, among the most important programs of the European Union to support the Bologna process in Central Asia - Tempus, Erasmus Mundus, is Vocational Education, with the support of the European Training Foundation, Research and Education Network of Central Asia (CAREN).

However, the scientists of Kazakhstan and the former Soviet Union believe that the system of education and science inherited from the Soviet Union was more progressive. In particular, European Union offered education initiatives in support of the Bologna process, which considered to be a step backward for Kazakhstan and all post-Soviet states. The introduction of the three-tier system of higher education (Bachelor / Master / Doctor) has led to the fragmentation of a full-fledged higher education in two stages – undergraduate, graduate and postgraduate education system now has only one degree - PhD, although until 2010 in Kazakhstan there was two-tier system of postgraduate education - Graduate School (postgraduate) and doctorate, which was an order of magnitude more complex than a similar system in the framework of the Bologna process, as required to protect two scientific dissertation research.

Researchers should note positive side of the EU initiative in the field of education in Central Asia. Thus, “Electronic Silk Road” was an effectively implemented project, which had its “aim to link Central Asia to the global communication networks of the Internet, as well as providing opportunities for students, teachers and scientists of Central Asia to participate in modern forms of learning throughout life” (2007). Also, progressive regional project was realized in 2009 for the five republics Central Asian Research and Education Network (CAREN) with the support

of the European Training Foundation (European Training Foundation). Broadband, high-speed Internet connection is designed for students and scholars of the region, 200 universities and research institutions in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Kazakhstan, adapted to modern IT technologies. The project aimed at the development of educational and scientific sector in the region by providing access to modern technology and IT support remote collaboration online, providing a path for global scientific cooperation. For these purposes from 2009 to 2011 EU has allocated 5 million EURO (2012).

“European arrogance” is appearing in European Union’s intention to “adjust” countries willing to cooperate in its pattern without taking into account national traditions, established values and mentality of the people living in these states. This problem is particularly important at the moment when, according to some scientists, there is a crisis of the social state models in Europe (Popova 2012) and the intensive development of the social state in Asia (United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Japan and others.).

In addition, Kazakhstan has developed Eurasian concept of human rights (Busurmanov 2006). The essence of the Eurasian concept developed by Busurmanov (2006), based on the idea of a fourth generation of human rights - collective rights and freedoms, right of community groups to be themselves, to have their own culture, identity, language and religion. The researchers endorse the opinion of Professor Busurmanov (2011) that “individual rights and freedoms will take place in a given society and state, when and where individual rights and freedoms will be adequate to the collectivist and public expectations and will assume mutual obligations and responsibility to each other”. Indeed, nowadays, scientists and politicians, lawyers focused on individual rights and freedoms, sometimes to the detriment of the public, which generates selfishness and individualism. For the society of Kazakhstan, with its multi-ethnic and multi-cultural specifics, an important role plays inter-ethnic harmony and peace. Such a multinational state can develop in civilized manner preserving tolerance and mutual respect. Therefore, we agree with professor Busurmanov (2011) that “Eurasian conception of human rights appears relevant and meet the challenges of time the scientific idea can lead to the need for new regional Eurasian Charter on Human and Peoples Rights”.

Another argument in favor of the Eurasian concept of rights and freedoms is its tolerance, as it takes into account the interests and priorities of both Europe and Asia, in contrast to many of the concepts. Busurmanov (2011) noted “there has been a mega-trend, aimed at giving to all Western European universal value”. The European concept of human rights and freedoms based on such a radical vision is of course fundamentally flawed. Culture and art were born and flourished not only in Europe, what about Ancient China, India, Japan, Kazakhstan and other countries? Therefore, the Eurasian concept of rights and freedoms is the most versatile, as it contains the principles and priorities of the people of Asia and Europe.

It should be noted that the “arrogance” in relation to Kazakhstan is typical not only for Europe, but also for Russia.

Secondly, the Partnership Strategy of the European Union and Central Asia was aimed primarily at promoting the interests of the European Union, and not the interests of the Central Asian republics. Thus, the fundamental interests of the European Union are concentrated in the energy sector, namely to increase the involvement of European companies in the development of Kazakhstan’s oil and gas fields also in the creation of alternative routes for transporting oil to Europe across the Caspian Sea, and so on. Thus, the strategy lists six priorities, and the first priority is “Human rights, rule of law, good governance and democratization.” If we look at it in terms of financial expenses, it actually reveals a different picture. The largest investments from the EU budget and planned by large private businesses aimed at “energy and transport” and “economy and trade,” were given a third priority. Almost by third, less share of investments accounted for “youth and education” and “human rights, rule of law and democratization” and by half, less the amount - on «the environment and water resources».

In the sphere of interests of the European Union was not present the development of light industry, machinery in Kazakhstan, and so on. Thus, in the commodity structure of Kazakhstan’s exports to the European Union, mineral raw materials still account for the main share, which corresponds to 89.3 percent, while imports from the European Union to Kazakhstan account for the largest amount of machinery, equipment and vehicles 55.2 percent.

This situation does not correspond to economic interests and prospects of Kazakhstan. However, it suits the European Union, which is economically interested in the preservation of such trade structure, until the problem is resolved with the dependence of its economy from external energy.

Thirdly, the Strategy of Partnership between the European Union and Central Asia did not take into account the differences between the countries of Central Asia and the peculiarities of each country. So, Kazakhstan is significantly different from other Central Asian countries by having more favorable socio-economic status, the highest proportion of foreign trade with Europe, closer penetration of European values, culture, philosophy, views. This situation is due to favorable geographical location to Europe, the presence of rich natural resources and, to some extent, the mentality of the Kazakh people.

Fourthly, the implementation of the strategy of the European Union and Central Asia was affected by the global financial and economic crisis. In varying degrees, it influenced the development of the Central Asian states, as well as the European Union.

Nowadays, the program such as “Silk Wind” shows the greatest interest. Its participants are Turkey, Georgia, Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan. On this route it is planned to introduce a single tariff for transportation of goods, simplifying customs and border procedures, which objectively affect the speed of delivery of goods. In the future, the corridor will be connected to the trans-European road VIKING, extending from the Black Sea to the Baltic Sea. Today, the EU is the main trading partner of the Central Asian states. European investment for the implementation of transport plans in the region is unobservable and significant, for example, only the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development has invested about 750 mln dollar in the various transportation projects. However, as recognized by the European and local experts, the level of activity in the Brussels when compared to the region does not match its economic role. This is due to a number of objective reasons, as well as competition in the region between China, the US and Russia (Ordabayev 2015).

Despite all of the above critical points, we cannot disregard positive developments in the implementation of EU policy in Central Asia during the years 2007-2013, which has the prospects

for further developments of Europe in Central Asia and Kazakhstan, and opposite, Kazakhstan in the Europe. It is time to “build bridges” and maintaining “stability” of those bridges in mutual relations and cooperation. In this sense, the experience of convergence of the European Union and Central Asia deserves attention, especially in the course of further development of strategic partnership (Gubaidullina 2014).

However, despite this, and the obvious fact that Kazakhstan has shown great interest in developing high-grade and multifaceted ties with the European Union, today the results of the European policy in the Central Asian region are more than modest.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the European Union should take a more active attitude for approval of the European direction in the region and take into account the interests of Kazakhstan. European model cannot be transferred mechanically to the particular Central Asian state. Energy dialogue includes the supply of hydrocarbons to Central and Western Europe, with simultaneous involvement of European investment in the development pipeline infrastructure. In this context, it is considered promising cooperation within the multilateral framework agreement on the transit of energy resources in accordance with the Energy Charter Treaty.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. To perceive the Republic of Kazakhstan as an equal partner and the implementation of strategic initiatives to take into account the uniqueness of cultural elements, religion, traditions, outlook and mentality of citizens of Kazakhstan.
2. Strengthen technological cooperation with Kazakhstan, as Kazakhstan would like to attract advanced European technologies in the fields of transport and communications, energy, environment and health, as well as in the development of small and medium-sized businesses.
3. To support the recent initiatives of Kazakhstan, related to its transition to a “green economy” and preparations for the international exhibition “EXPO-2017” entitled “Energy of the Future”, as well as the im-

plementation of the Partnership program “Green Bridge” to promote sustainable development in the Central-Asian and other regions of the world.

4. Since European countries have problems with the gas supply, the parties should explore opportunities for joint projects in the gas industry.
5. Develop the legal and contractual basis of the strategic partnership between the European Union and Kazakhstan considering the new trends of geopolitics to jointly overcome new challenges and threats.
6. Western European countries have accumulated considerable experience in compliance and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms. Cooperation with the European Union will allow for studying the legal mechanisms of human rights protection, and their introduction to the legal environment in Kazakhstan.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors are grateful for methodological assistance in the writing of this article to the Professor of the Eurasian national university L.N. Gumilyov Kushkumbayev A.K., assistant professor at Amserdam university, PhD Laszlo Marosh also PhD, assistant professor of management college of business administration at the Savannah State university, I. Korovyakovskaya.

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