

CHAPTER 9

DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS BETWEEN THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION AND KAZAKHSTAN REPUBLIC IN YELTSIN'S PERIOD: PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this research is to analyse the interstate relations in the Post-Soviet period. The beginning of 1990's was a turning point for the new states which were to appear after the collapse of the USSR. Regarding sovereignty and independence, different conditions occurred for the Soviet states. President Nursultan Nazarbaev's dominance of Kazakhstan's national security agenda offers a partial explanation for the cooperation, but somehow, he stayed as a prominent leader in the post-Soviet era. Yeltsin's period became crucial for Kazakhstan's national and confessional identity. Democratic elections and a national growth plan for Kazakhstan became an important challenge for the economy, national policy and international relations. It was also challenging to create new forms of cooperation with ex-Soviet partners and European countries. During the process, the Russian Federation tried to influence Kazakh policy.

Keywords: Russian - Kazakh relations, collapse of USSR, Yeltsin's period

On December 16, 1986, on the recommendation of M. S. Gorbachev, Russian G. Kolbin was elected as the first secretary in place of Kazakh Kunayev, who had been general secretary since 1964, at the general meeting of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Kazakhstan. This was an appointment that was contrary to the party norms at the time. In this case, the Republic was ruled by someone who was not Kazakh. He was not even a member of local party organizations. This was considered a national insult by the Kazakh youth and caused spontaneous protests. Between December 17 and 18, mass student demonstrations arose in Alma-Ata. During the protest, which was suppressed by the police and soldiers, 22 students were killed, more than one thousand were injured and more than two thousand were arrested. News about the events spread all over Kazakhstan and demonstrations were held in all cities. After that, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Kazakhstan began to clean the high schools in the republic, komsomol and party organizations. The Central Committee of the Soviet Socialist Communist Party announced the events as a manifestation of the emergence of Kazakh nationalism (Nazarbayev, 2003; Kara, 1997; Kara-Yeşilot, 2007).

During the liberalism process that began in the USSR, the Alma-Ata events went down in history as “Jeltoksan” (December) which signifies an effort to increase the political activity of the Kazakh people. In spite of the prosecution of the authorities between 1987 and 1988, informal organizations, which were initially accepted as periphery movements, started to emerge in Kazakhstan. In early 1989, the first parties emerged as an alternative to the Soviet Socialist Communist Party. G. B. Kolbin put forward the idea of using the Kazakh language in the work on the state, trying to seize their initiative, but he did not earn community support with this. In June 1989, Gorbachev had to call Kolbin back to Moscow and N. A. Nazarbayev became the new leader of Kazakhstan (Sheretov, 2003; Kazakbalasi, 1988; Alaşbek, 1987).

On April 24, 1990, the presidency was established in Kazakhstan. N. A. Nazarbayev, formerly the Supreme Soviet President of the Kazakh SSR, was elected as the first president of the Republic. On October 25, 1990, the Republican Parliament adopted a declaration that the Kazakh SSR was the sovereign state. In the declaration, it was declared that Kazakhstan as a sovereign state united with other voluntary republics and had relations with them on the basis of agreements. The declaration stressed that the most important duty of the Kazakh SSR was the revival and development of the Kazakh people. The document regulated the principles of the political and economic structure of the republic and took the first step in recognizing it as an independent subject in international law (Meshcheryakov, 2014).

However, Nazarbayev did not attempt to gain popularity in the republic by discrediting the center of unity or the communist party. During 1990-1991, he did not even once declare that

Kazakhstan should leave the SSSR. On the contrary, while commenting on the proclamation of the sovereignty of the Russian Federation on June 12, 1990, Nazarbayev underlined: "... We approach indulgently to people who are in the congress of the people's representatives of the Russian Federative Socialist Republic of Russian. However, we hope that this will not lead to the collapse of our state, because only Russia has the ability to fulfill the mission of unification..." (Gorbachev, 2007). Nazarbayev actively worked on the establishment of the new unity agreement, which was a priority for him in August 1991. In this plan he manifested himself from the outset as a moderate and pragmatic thinking politician, who understood the importance of the local rulers of that time. During the course of his work, Nazabayev met Gorbachev, Yeltsin and the leaders of the unity republics many times and tried to create a general approach for the restructuring of the USSR. Not surprisingly, Kazakhstan participated in the most active referendum on the future of the Soviet Union on March 17, 1991. Voter turnout in the Republic exceeded 88%, while 94% of votes were favored by the SSSR¹. Nazarbayev signed the "9+1 declaration" on 23 April 1991². In the meantime, he said he was personally prepared for the maintenance of the restriction of being subject to the center within the revised SSSR. He then supported Gorbachev, stating that they had ratified the new draft unity agreement which was being worked on by them (Gorbachev, 2007).

The events of the State Emergency Committee were a challenge for Nazarbayev. During the whole coup d'état, the situation remained stable in Kazakhstan. After a series of meetings on 19 August, 1991, the president made a statement of political neutrality. The statement confirmed that all power in the republic belonged to Soviet organs, but did not clarify exactly who was the contractor (Vasilyeva, 1991). He made a second statement the following day and underlined that the State Emergency Committee was of an anti-constitutional character and called on all republics involved in the union to sign the unity agreement (Nazarbayev, 2009). Nazarbayev condemned the State of Emergency Committee and won the support of Yeltsin and increased his authority among his own citizens. Although the independence of the republic was not declared after the end of the coup d'état, the sovereignty of Kazakhstan became more active. Nazarbayev was aiming to maintain the renewed unit the way it used to be and refused to participate in the signing of the Beluvezha agreements (Nazarbayev, 2003). When Nazarbayev learned that Yeltsin, L. M. Kravchuk and S. S. Shushkevich had annihilated the SSSR, he became one of the initiators of the meeting of the executives of

1 "Obitogah referanduma SSSR, sostoyavshegosya 17 Marta 1991 goda: Soobshcheniye Tsentralnoy komissii referanduma SSSR", Pravda, 1991, 27 March; Gorbachev, 2007: 242.

2 "Sovmestnoe zayavleniye o bezotlagatelnh merah postabilizatsii obstonovki v strane i preodoleniyu krizisa ot 23 aprelya 1991 g.", Pravda, 1991, 24 April; Gorbachev, 2007: 242.

Central Asian countries and Kazakhstan in Ashgabad on December 13, 1991. It was decided to unite the “Central Asian Quintet” in the Commonwealth of Independent States (*Sodrujestvo Nezavisimikh Gosudarstv*) (Nazarbayev, 2003). The Supreme Soviet of Kazakhstan, the last of the parliaments of the Union republics, adopted an independent state law on 16 December (Kara-Yeşilot, 2007). On December 17, 1991, the Russian Federation announced the recognition of Kazakhstan and on December 20, Kazakhstan recognized the Russian Federation (Oğan, 2002). On December 21, Kazakhstan merged with other post-Soviet republics in the Commonwealth of Independent States. Interestingly, the documents that make up the Commonwealth was fully signed in Alma-Ata (Oğan, 2002). This shows that Nazarbayev attaches great importance to the development of integration processes in the post-Soviet space and respect of the leaders of the new states. From this moment on, the President of Kazakhstan became the main leader of the idea of integration into the Commonwealth of Independent States. In addition, Russian-Kazakh relations improved to a billetteral level.

Kazakhstan has established much closer relations with the Russian Federation from the very beginning due to its broad borders and the existence of many economic and social ties compared to other Central Asian countries (Safranchuk, 2014). From the moment of the dissolution of the SSSR, Russia and Kazakhstan established inter-state relations with each other. Their cooperation was organized according to the agreements signed in 1990-1991. The parties recognized each other as sovereign states. Both sides granted equal rights and freedoms to all citizens, regardless of their nationality, and guaranteed the cultural and linguistic freedoms of minorities living on their territory. In Kazakhstan, minorities were important for Moskow because of the considerable proportion of Russian origin. The parties agreed to respect each other's territorial integrity within existing borders. In the early 1990s, the consensus on territorial integrity protected the interest of Alma-Ata, as there were loud calls for the integration of inhabitants of Russian origin in the northern regions of Kazakhstan to Russia, as in the case of Orenburg. The Parties decided to improve cooperation in different areas, maintaining the common security system and providing the most favorable conditions for each other in terms of trade³.

Despite the efforts of Yeltsin and Nazarbayev to continue to develop Russian-Kazakh relations, after signing the Alma-Ata Agreement on 21 December 1991, the situation in Kazakhstan started to change very rapidly. Nationalism, officially condemned by the Republican administration, struck the local community at the grassroots level. The activities

3 “Dogovor mejdu Rossiyskoy Sovetskoy Federativnoy Sotsialistiçeskoj Respublikoy i Kazahskoy Sovetskoy sotsialistiçeskoj Respublikoy ot 21 Noyabrya 1990 g.”, Vneshnyaya Politika Rossii: Sb. Dokumentov, 1996: 19-23.

of political parties and non-governmental organizations, which endeavored to rewrite the history of the country and bring down the situation of Russian population, began to be clearly felt. Kazakh authorities accelerated the use of the Kazakh language instead of Russian in the office. In response to this, the anti-Kazakh mood increased in the north of the republic. Their main spokesmen were the Russian movement “Lad” (Republican Slavic Movement) and the Kozak of Kazakhstan. Their movement saw Alma-Ata as a major threat to national security until the mid-1990s. The Kozaks were banned from wearing uniforms and forming a military unit. They described themselves as a separate ethnic group on an equal level with the Kazakhs and the Russians, and acted to establish an autonomous republic by uniting the territory of Northern Kazakhstan and Southern Siberia. They crossed the border of Russia and joined the troops of the Orenburg and Omsk Kozaks. Since the external Kozaks were not seen as separate from the Russian inhabitants of Kazakhstan, local authorities began to distrust the entire Russian population and welcomed their departure from the republic, even though they did not admit that it had become generalised (Olkott, 2003). In the beginning of 1992, a large portion of the Russian population left Kazakhstan, adversely affecting Russia-Kazakhstan diplomatic relations, though this did not cause a major crisis.

On May 23, 1992, Kazakhstan signed the Lisbon Protocol which had already been by the SSSR and United States on the reduction and limitation of strategic offensive weapons. Accordingly, Kazakhstan, like the other republics emerged after the collapse of the Soviet Union having nuclear weapons in its territory, and was obligated to quickly participate in the agreement on non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and destroy the existing nuclear ammunition⁴.

Kazakhstan, which still has land issues that have not yet been resolved with its neighbors, was also under pressure from political instability and separatist movements. Even so, Kazakhstan could look at its nuclear legacy as a means of maintaining security in the event of a possible conflict with Russia or China.

Kazakhstan had 1216 nuclear warheads installed on 104 ballistic intercontinental SS-18 rockets (Kazakhstan: 20 Let Nyezavisimosti, 2011). This amount was several times greater than that of Great Britain, France and China at the time. In Kazakhstan, there was a large amount of natural uranium and non-ferrous mines needed for the production of the nuclear-powered rockets of the SSSR. High-tech complexes for the production of the latest nuclear technologies

4 "Protokol k Dogovoru mejdu SSSR i Soyedinennimi Shtatami Ameriki o Sokrashchenii i Ogranichenii Strategicheskikh Nastupitelnih Vooruzheniy ot 23 Maya 1992 g", Rossiya-Ukraina. 1990-2000. Dokumenti i Materiali, 1, 2001: 69-71.

were established on the territory of the Republic of Kazakhstan in the framework of the Soviet program on the production of nuclear-headed rockets (Kazakhstan: 20 Let Nyezavisimosti, 2011).

Kazakhstan did not have the technical means to use nuclear weapons or, if necessary, the financial means to accommodate such powerful ammunition (Kaipov, 2008). On this ground, Kazakhstan had been under great pressure from the United States since January 1992 for rapid disarmament. These western countries have become the main condition for Kazakhstan to be accepted as a country with full rights in international relations and to be provided with economic assistance (Tokayev, 2009). Thus, Kazakhstan's acceptance of a largely nuclear-free status was the result of its mutual relations with the United States, not Russia.

Nazarbayev, after signing the Lisbon Protocol on May 25, 1992, went to Moscow for official discussions. The Presidents of the Russian Federation and Kazakhstan agreed on new agreements on friendship, cooperation and mutual assistance (Oğan, 2002). Russia wanted to protect its border if necessary because Kazakhstan did not have national military forces in order to guarantee the security of its southern borders. Russia would help Kazakhstan to build and develop an army. On the other hand, Kazakhstan would not object to Russia's use of military points and polygons on its territory. In the event of an attack against one of the parties in Russia or Kazakhstan as military allies, the other would give him all the necessary assistance, including in military matters⁵. Thus, Kazakhstan, which would be cleansed of nuclear weapons, strengthened its defense with the support of Russia. Politically, both sides respected each other's territorial integrity and borders. In the field of economy, they underlined the issues of energy, transport, and the development of the ecosystems of the Caspian and Aral Sea, providing convenience. They were also committed to developing relationships in culture, art, sports, tourism, education and health⁶.

Yeltsin visited Alma-Ata on 10 October 1992. As a result of the negotiations between the Russian Federation and Kazakhstan, both leaders discussed the issues of friendship, cooperation and mutual assistance. The two countries reached an agreement: Trade-economic cooperation, military and scientific partnership, mutual territorial integrity and the invariance of borders (Meshcheryakov, 2014).

Towards the end of 1992, Russian-Kazakh relations began to be strained due to different interpretations of the status of the Caspian Sea. In connection with the crisis in the national

5 "Dogovor o Kollektivnoy Bezopasnosti ot 15 Maya 1992", Vneshnyaya Politika Rossii: Sb. Dokumentov, 1996: 357-360.

6 "Dogovor o Drujbe, Sotrudnichestve i Vzaimnoy Pomoshchi mejdru Rossiyskoy Federatsii i Respublikoy Kazakistan ot 25 Maya 1992 g.", Diplomaticheskii Vestnik, 1992: 36-43.

economy, the Kazakhstan administration had adopted a policy of actively attracting Western investment to the country, particularly in the oil industry. Nazarbayev was trying to attract Western investors to the oil fields in the area of the continental shelf in the Caspian Sea. As a result, Alma-Ata proposed that every country on the Caspian Sea should be able to extract the resources in its own part of the sea. This was against Russia's point of view because Russia was in favor of the joint use of all the Caspian Sea resources (Jiltsov-Zoni-Ushkov, 2003; Oğan, 2002).

In this tension, the Russian government decided to block Kazakhstan's access to "the new type of ruble zone". Moscow seemed inconsistent and unreasonable. V. Chernomyrdin, who met Nazarbayev in December 1992 and January 1993, assured him that after the introduction of the new currency in Russia, Kazakhstan would remain in the ruble zone. However, as of 1 April 1993, when the Russian Federation began to implement monetary reform throughout the country, the Russian Central Bank refused to hand over the new banknotes to the commonwealth countries, including Kazakhstan. This decision was officially announced to Nazarbayev on June 30, 1993, when Kazakhstan actively poured out the old money leaked from Russia, thus leading to a serious failure in the republic and economic instability with arising panic (Meshcheryakov, 2014).

Kazakhstan was not yet ready to mint money because it did not have the necessary financial instruments and was worried that it might worsen its relations with Russia from a political point of view. So, Kazakhstan had to accept the extremely strict conditions of Moscow for the unification of the monetary system. At the same time, Kazakhstan had to agree with Russia on the direction of all its macroeconomic policies, compromising its economic independence. At the same time, Kazakhstan had to transfer some of its gold reserves and other high liquid assets to the common fund in exchange for the Russian ruble it used. However, after the armed clashes in Moscow in October 1993 and the shooting at the Russian parliament, the Russian government decided to support the protesters who opposed the creation of a new type of ruble zone. On October 19, Russian Prime Minister A. N. Shohin, who had gone to Alma-Ata, informed Nazarbayev that the ruble zone would not be officially created. In this situation, the president of Kazakhstan enacted urgent measures on November 15 to introduce the tenge as the national currency (Mlechin, 2010).

The above-mentioned events undoubtedly shook the Kazakh administration's confidence in Russia to a certain extent. This situation played an important role in Kazakhstan's diplomatic relations with the West. The Russian Federation expressed a desire to agree on the development of fuel-energy complexes in order to improve its relations with Kazakhstan, and

an agreement was reached on 25 December 1993. This document addresses the preservation of the shipment of Kazakh fuel to Russia and the mutual consultation of the parties on the construction of national energy programs. Russia and Kazakhstan had to take measures to ensure the stabilization of power lines, oil and gas pipelines⁷.

From the beginning of 1994, the Russian administration began to put the Russian-speaking people in Kazakhstan in the background of bilateral relations. Moscow had adopted the policy of establishing close diplomatic contacts, avoiding Kazakhstan's departure from its sphere of influence. In this context, Nazabayev was invited to Moscow for the first time since the start of the bilateral diplomatic relations. During this visit, which was held between 28-30 March 1994, the parties agreed on the solution of the problems in order to ensure close mutual cooperation, economic cooperation and integration, establishment of a customs union, conditions regarding use of the Baikonur space base, and a consular agreement. In total, they signed 23 agreements (Oğan, 2002). Accordingly, there would be a close cooperation on the fields of energy complexes, mining, chemical industry, transportation etc. The Baikonur space base was to be operated by the Russian Federation for 20 years for an annual payment of 115 million dollars⁸.

The year 1994 was critical in resolving issues concerning Russian-speaking people. With the adoption of the new constitution, all powers of the state were held in the hands of the president (Meshcheryakov, 2014). Residents of Russian origin in Kazakhstan could not obtain dual citizenship, but they were entitled to equal rights with Kazakhs (Ölçekçi, 1996).

As a result of the negotiations with the US counterparts after 1992, the Kazakhstan administration quickly attempted to eliminate nuclear weapons in the territory of the country. In November 1994, however, Kazakhstan sold 600 kg of uranium to the United States, which is enough to make 24 atomic bombs. The operation was carried out in a very secret manner and did not cause any interpretation by the Russian Federation. On December 5, 1994, during the OSCE summit in Budapest, Nazabayev, Yeltsin, B. Clinton and J. Meycor, in connection with the accession of Kazakhstan to the non-proliferation agreement, would be responsible for any damage to Kazakhstan's territorial integrity or political independence, by signing the declaration guaranteeing against all kinds of threats. Later France and China also provided

7 Soglashenie mejdu Pravitelstvom Rossiyskoy Federatsii i Pravitelstvom Respubliki Kazahstan o Sotrudnichestve i razvitii Toplivno-Energeticheskikh Kompleksov ot 25 Dekabrya 1993 g", Byulleten Mejdunarodnih Dogovorov, No:9, 1994: 33-36.

8 Dogovor o Dalneyshem Uglublenii Ekonomicheskogo Sotrudnichestva i Integratsii Rossiyskoy Federatsii i Respubliki Kazahstan ot 28 Marta 1994 g.", Diplomatcheskij Vestnik, No:9-10, 1994: 49-51; Oğan, 2002: 147.

similar guarantees. As a result, the last nuclear structure on the territory of Kazakhstan was destroyed in the Semipalatinsk Nuclear Polygon on May 31, 1995 (Meshcheryakov, 2014; Kazantsev, 2008; Oğan, 2002).

On 20 January 1995, Kazakhstan joined the agreement on the establishment of a customs unions with the Russian Federation and Belarus. This agreement revealed Kazakhstan's commitment to rapprochement with the Russian Federation⁹. As a matter of fact, Yeltsin and Nazarbayev signed a declaration on the enlargement and deepening of cooperation which involved economic, trade, energy, security, border protection and coordination in foreign policy¹⁰.

On April 26, 1996, the President of the People's Republic of China, the Russian Federation, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, which had borders with each other, signed a memorandum of understanding in Shanghai city on solidarity in the military area in the border areas (Kazantsev, 2008).

On October 18, 1996, the Russian Federation and Kazakhstan signed an agreement on the prevention of double taxation¹¹.

Kazakhstan had finally decided to settle the Russian-speaking population issue. In 1996, the Russian Kozaks clearly obtained the right to dress in uniform, to rally and to organize other activities. Thus, their opposition to the Kazakh administration was also substantially eliminated. At the same time, it was officially decided to use Russian language in state departments and organizations and local administrations on an equal basis with Kazakhs (Meshcheryakov, 2014; Somuncuoğlu, 2016; Oğan, 2002).

On April 24, 1997, the Russian Federation, People's Republic of China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan signed a mutual agreement on the reduction of military forces in the border regions (Babayan, 2016).

On 10 December, 1997, the capital of Kazakhstan moved to Akmolla. On May 6, 1998, the city was renamed Astana. On 10 June 1998, the international presentation of the new capital was made. In this event, Russian was not present.

9 "Soglashenie o Tamojennom Soyuze ot 20 Yanvarya 1995 g.", Byulleten Mejdunaronnih Dogovorov, No:6, 1995: 11-12; Kazantsev, 2008: 132; Oğan, 2002: 151.

10 "Deklaratsiya o Rasshirenii i Uglublennii Rossiysko-Kazahstanskogo Sotrudnichestva ot 20 Yanvarya 1995 g.", Diplomaticheskiy Vestnik, No:2, 1995: 40-42.

11 Konventsiya mejdju Pravitelstvom Rossiyskoy Federatsii i Pravitelstvom Kazahstanov Ustraneni Dvoynogo Nalogooblojeniya i Predotvrashchenii Ukloneniya ot Uplatı Nalogovna Dohod i Kapital ot 18 Oktyabrya 1996 g.", Byulleten Mejdunarodnih Dogovorov, No:6, 1998: 34-50.

In 1998, another controversial issue was resolved between the Russian Federation and Kazakhstan in relation to the division of the northern part of the Caspian Sea between the two countries. The agreement was reached on July 6, 1998, which separated the borders between Russia and Kazakhstan by a modified line that appropriately eliminated the land and bed of the bottom of the sea. Both parties would open the northern part of the sea to common use including the free passage of ships, fishing etc.¹². Russia and Kazakhstan later signed the protocol to determine the geographic coordinates of the modified midline and the controversial deposits separating them (Kurmangazi, Tsentralnoe and Hvalinskoe). Accordingly, Russia received Hvalinskoe and Tsentralnoe while Kazakhstan received Kurmangazi deposits¹³. As well as the agreement, Yeltsin and Nazarbayev claimed a declaration on “Permanent Friendship and Cooperation towards 21st Century”. The declaration emphasized the close cooperation between the two countries in the fields of education, science and culture stating that an agreement was reached on the establishment of Russian-Kazakh and Kazakh-Russian joint universities. The parties also agreed that Yeltsin would pay an official visit to Kazakhstan in the autumn. Meanwhile, on August 17, Russia declared a moratorium that Russia could not pay its debts. Despite the extreme depreciation of the ruble, the Kazakh administration took extraordinary measures to preserve the value of the tenge, but did not succeed. As a result, it became necessary to devalue the tenge. Thus, inflation in Kazakhstan increased considerably and the republic entered into an economic crisis. This also led to a decrease in trade between Kazakhstan and Russia (Meshcheryakov, 2014; N. A. Nazarbayev, 2006).

Yeltsin came to Alma-Ata on October 12, 1998 to make official contacts. Yeltsin visited Uzbekistan the day before. He was unconscious for a moment because he was ill when he was met by İ. Kerimov at Tashkent airport. This prompted rumors that the Russian leader's health had deteriorated considerably. After that, Nazarbayev's relations with him changed significantly because he could no longer rely on his unconditional guarantee of Kazakhstan's security. The half-day visit was limited to a few hours. Nevertheless, it was emphasized that both countries would continue their co-operation to overcome economic difficulties (Meshcheryakov, 2014).

Nazarbayev came to Turkey on October 29, 1998 to negotiate the construction of the oil pipeline project “Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan” which wouldn't pass through the territory of the

12 "Soglashenie mejdu Rossiyskoy Federatsiey i Respublikoy Kazahstan o Razgranichenii na Severnoy Časti Kaspiyskogo Morya v Tselyah Osuščestvleniya Suverennih Pravna Nyedropolzovanie ot 6 İyulya 1998 g.," Byulleten Mejdunarodnih Dogovorov, No:1, 2004: 68-71.

13 "Soglashenie mejdu Rossiyskoy Federatsiey i Respublikoy Kazahstan o Razgranichenii na Severnoy Časti Kaspiyskogo Morya v Tselyah Osuščestvleniya Suverennih Pravna Nyedropolzovanie ot 6 İyulya 1998 g.," Byulleten Mejdunarodnih Dogovorov, 2004, No:1, s.71-77.

Russian Federation and deliver Caspian hydrocarbons to Turkey. After negotiation, president of Azerbaijan H. A. Aliyev, president of Georgia E. A. Shevardnadze, president of Uzbekistan İ. Kerimov, president of Turkey S. Demirel and Nazarbayev issued the Ankara Declaration on construction of “Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan” oil pipeline and stated that their intention was to start the construction as soon as possible. This move by Kazakhstan caused anger in Russia because with such a project, Central Asia could no longer depend on Moscow for energy transport. Undoubtedly, Russia’s influence over Central Asia was also diminishing (Meshcheryakov, 2014).

At the beginning of 1999, the Russian Federation announced its readiness to withdraw state borders with Kazakhstan and to reconcile the agreed divisions. This reveals the belief that Russia’s existing borders were unchanging and allowed only some minor parts to be corrected. This was also a positive development for Kazakhstan because it began to maintain border control and thus prevented the infiltration of ideas or persons capable of causing confusion on its territory (Olkott, 2003).

On July 6, 1999, Russian-Kazakh relations faced a new challenge because the proton loaded heavy Russian missile launched from the Baikonur space base crashed shortly after the launch. Parts of the rocket full of unburned toxins fell on the steppe of Karagandinsk. Astana then announced that Russia would not be allowed any further launches from the space base until the cause of the accident was explained. In addition, Kazakhstan demanded immediate repayment of the debt exceeding 37 million dollars for use of the Baikonur space base. The ban on the use of the space base was abolished when the Russian Federation immediately met the demands of Kazakhstan (Meshcheryakov, 2014).

The new president of Russia V. Putin played an important role in solving the concrete problems observed in the Russian-Kazakh relations for the first time in connection with the fall of the rocket. As the official successor of Yeltsin, his visit to Astana on September 24, 1999, was of great importance for the Kazakh side. This was the first official visit of the highest level of the Russian administration to the new capital of Kazakhstan. During the visit, an agreement was signed in Astana on the border cooperation between the two countries between 1999-2007. After that, with the close cooperation of Putin and Nazarbayev, the problems between the Russia and Kazakhstan would be minimized and relations would reach the best level since the dissolution of the USSR (Meshcheryakov, 2014).

In 2000, the situation began to change significantly. Putin’s election as president of Russia was instrumental in achieving political and economic stability in Russia, strengthening the

position of Russia in the world arena and changing the principles of diplomacy. This also affected the immediate recovery of Russian-Kazakh relations. Thus, Russia and Kazakhstan became strategic partners and were in mutual cooperation. They discussed being active in political and military fields. They began to take quick steps to improve commercial-economic and inter-regional cooperation. They expanded the links in humanitarian fields. They set the course to deepen bilateral integration. This trend remained constant even after the arrival of the US and its NATO allies in Central Asia. Unlike Russia's relations with other countries in the region, Russian-Kazakh cooperation continued to develop at a high level and the support of the parties to each other increased much more.

Conclusion

The Russian Federation and the Republic of Kazakhstan established political relations from the moment they were founded. However, in the first decade of bilateral relations, the pace of growth of trade-economic cooperation between the two countries was observed to be lagging compared to the mutual political and military alliance. In the mutual trade balance, the balance was against Kazakhstan. In this way, Russia purchased mostly raw materials and semi-finished products from Kazakhstan, and in return sold Kazakhstan finished products. Investment partnership initiatives, one of the important elements of economic cooperation, were inadequate in many areas, particularly in energy transport. Kazakhstan's efforts to limit Russia's infiltration into areas strategically important for its economy (oil, uranium industry, space exploration) and to create concrete conditions suitable for the market were among the factors that negatively affected the course of relations.

Russia's technological backwardness and its inability to participate in the modernization of Kazakhstan's economy and education system also failed the expectations of mutual agreements. It was seen that the Russian government was reluctant and inadequate to help Kazakhstan during the economic crises. This caused Kazakhstan to lose its confidence in Russia. In spite of all these economic problems, there were important developments during the reign of Yeltsin in terms of the discussions on the use of the Caspian Sea as well as the future of Russian origin people in Kazakhstan, who had high potential to cause problems. In addition, maintaining a high cooperation policy between Russia and Kazakhstan, strengthening the general defense field of the two sides, expanding the military-political and military-technical cooperation, reaching a consensus on the main international problems of Russia and Kazakhstan, and trying to observe Russia's foreign political interest by Kazakhstan. Besides this, the mutual support of the sides to each other was strengthened and many positive steps were taken to improve inter-state cooperation in the cultural-human sphere.

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