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Azerbaijan – Kazakhstan relations: current situation and prospects¹

Abstract: Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan should not be seen as two states which are close because of their Soviet past. In fact, the titular ethnic groups of Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan – Azerbaijanis and Kazakhs – come from a greater Turkic family. Azerbaijani-Kazakh brotherhood takes its roots from the very origins of the Turkic peoples that spread from the Altai Mountains and has been cemented by the Islamic factor.

Maintaining maritime borders through the Caspian Sea, Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan are important nations for one another. Azerbaijan is seen as a bridge for Kazakhstan to access Turkey and Europe, while Kazakhstan offers Azerbaijan routes to Central Asia and China.

The two countries attach great importance to their mutual relations, both bilateral and within various international organizations. These relations have only increased and not experienced any downturns or problems in the past 25 years. Kazakhstan recognized the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan, which is an important deal for Azerbaijan in its current conflict with neighboring Armenia. The countries even reached an agreement on the legal status of the Caspian Sea quite rapidly, while similar accords are still absent with other littoral countries. They are both interested in developing an East-West transport and energy corridor, enjoying a favorable geopolitical location that could serve as a bridge between the continents.

Key words: Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Aliyev, Nazarbayev, Nagorno-Karabakh, Turkic, Caspian, oil, Kashagan, Silk Road

Introduction

In different periods of history, the territories of Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan were part of the same empires, including czarist Russia and the Soviet Union most recently. Following the collapse of the USSR, both Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan declared their independence, giving a start to mutual relations in almost all spheres of their activities.

However, Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan should not be seen as two states which are close because of their Soviet past. In fact, the titular ethnic groups of Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan – Azerbaijanis and Kazakhs – come from a greater Turkic family. Labeled '*dili bir, dini bir*', or "having the same language and the same religion", Azerbaijani-Kazakh brotherhood takes its roots from the very origins of the Turkic peoples that spread from the Altai Mountains and has been cemented by the Islamic factor. Despite the fact that Azerbaijani and Kazakh belong to different groups of the Turkic language family and are not mutually intelligible, and that the Azerbaijanis adhere to Shia branch of Islam, while the Kazakhs are Sunni Hanafi, many factors that are in common in both lands motivate them to regard to each other as more than being a partner country.

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The two countries attach great importance to their mutual relations, both bilateral and within various international organizations. These relations have been developing only upwards and have not experienced any downs or problems over the past 25 years. Kazakhstan recognized the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan, which is an important deal for Azerbaijan in its current conflict with neighboring Armenia. The countries even reached an agreement on the legal status of the Caspian Sea within a short time, while similar accords are still absent with other littoral countries. They are both interested in developing an East-West transport and energy corridor, enjoying a favorable geopolitical location that could serve as a bridge between the continents.

Moreover, Kazakhstan is home to at least 100,000 people of Azerbaijani origin, who also strengthen the brotherly and friendly relations of the two countries.

Political relations

A couple of months before the ultimate collapse of the USSR, a delegation of Soviet Azerbaijan paid a visit to Soviet Kazakhstan. The 10-year agreement which was signed as a result of the visit on October 1, 1991, mutually recognized each other's territorial integrity and pointed to the necessity of cooperation in the spheres of defense and security.

Diplomatic relations, however, between an independent Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan, were founded on August 30, 1992. The Kazakh embassy in Azerbaijan was opened on January 9, 1993, the Azerbaijan embassy in Kazakhstan on March 1, 2004. The Azerbaijani consulate general was inaugurated in Aktau on September 6, 2008 (*Azərbaycan-Qazaxıstan*, 2014).

During the period of the Popular Front, which came to power in Azerbaijan in the wake of post-Soviet nationalistic tendencies, Kazakhstan was of great interest for Azerbaijan in terms of promoting the bigger Turkic world. The Popular Front and its leader Abulfaz Elchibey, an ardent supporter of Turkic union, were interested in establishing closer ties with Turkey and the Central Asian republics and establishing joint institutions. In the first summit of the Turkic-speaking states held in Ankara in 1992, Elchibey proposed to apply to the UN to recognize Turkish as an official language of the organization. Nursultan Nazarbayev, Kazakh president, embraced the idea and asked each of the Turkic states to support this proposal at UN level.

After Heydar Aliyev, an ex-Politburo official, ascended to power in Azerbaijan in 1993, a more balanced foreign policy was chosen as a priority, as Baku decided to play with all actors interested in the region. The relations with Kazakhstan, developed both bilaterally and within international institutions, would be important for Azerbaijan mainly for political support in the Nagorno-Karabakh issue and economic projects. These mutual ties were further cemented by the personal relationship of Heydar Aliyev and Nursultan Nazarbayev, prominent members of the former Soviet nomenklatura.

The relations have been maintained at a high level ever since, while official visits of heads of state and government have taken turns. The Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev paid official and working visits to Azerbaijan in 1996, 2000, 2005, 2009, 2010 and 2013, while Azerbaijani president Heydar Aliyev (1993–2003) and Ilham Aliyev (since 2003) were on official and working visits in Kazakhstan in 1997, 1998, 2004, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010 and 2011 (*Azərbaycan-Qazaxıstan*, 2014).

During the first ever official visit by Nursultan Nazarbayev, a number of agreements that established the contractual-legal basis for the two countries, were signed. Among them were the Agreement on the basis of the relations between the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Agreement on promotion and protection of investments, the Agreement on cooperation in the oil and gas industry, the Joint declaration on the Caspian Sea issues, the cooperation agreements between the ministries of foreign affairs, national security organs and central banks.

Another series of documents signed the following year during Heydar Aliyev's return visit to Kazakhstan further reinforced the bilateral relations: the Declaration on further development and deepening of cooperation, the Memorandum of cooperation on transportation of Kazakh oil to world markets, the Agreement on bilateral visa-free regime, the free trade agreement, the treaty on legal assistance and legal relations in civil matters, the agreement on basic principles of cooperation in the field of petroleum engineering, etc.

The successful cooperation of Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan also generated an agreement on the division of the Caspian Sea which has been impossible to reach with other littoral countries such as Iran and Turkmenistan. Between 2001 and 2003, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Russia reached a breakthrough on the legal status of the Caspian Sea, as the countries managed to divide the seabed along the median line and agreed to a solution about their sectors. Each sector, with all its resources and surface, is an exclusive zone of its state. The objection of Iran and Turkmenistan to such a division has prevented all five littoral countries adopting a convention on the legal status of the Caspian Sea.

Following Ilham Aliyev's election as president in Azerbaijan in 2003, when the oil projects started yielding tangible results and bringing remarkable profits, thus, pushing an oil boom in the country, Azerbaijani-Kazakh relations continued to improve and reached a new level, in which the development of an energy and transport corridor became a key issue for the both parties.

During President Ilham Aliyev's working visit to Kazakhstan in June 2006, two major documents dealing with transporting Kazakh oil via the Caspian Sea and Azerbaijan's territory, through the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline, were signed.

As of 2016, the contractual-legal basis of Azerbaijani-Kazakh relations is based on over 100 agreements. The most important of them is undoubtedly the Agreement on Strategic Partnership and Allied Relations, which demonstrates the character of the relations. It was signed during Nursultan Nazarbayev's visit to Azerbaijan in 2005 (*Azərbaycan-Qazaxıstan*, 2010).

Many experts, especially on the Azerbaijani side, consider the relations strategic and dare to call Kazakhstan Azerbaijan's closest ally in Central Asia (*Azərbaycan-Qazaxıstan*, 2010), while Nursultan Nazarbayev referred to Azerbaijan as Kazakhstan's major part-

ner in the Caucasus. These relations have only increased and have not experienced any downturns or problems over the past 25 years.

The relations between the two countries have also developed within international organizations. Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan are members and participating states in several universal and regional entities, including the United Nations and its agencies, Commonwealth of Independent States, Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, Economic Cooperation Organization and Turkic Council.

Positioning itself as “the most European country” in Central Asia, Kazakhstan is very interested in cooperating with Western institutions dealing with security issues. It was the first of the republics of the former Soviet Union to take over the chairmanship of the OSCE in 2010 – Azerbaijan fully supported the idea in relevant sessions and meetings of the organization. The foreign ministry of Kazakhstan then elaborated a special program named “Path to Europe,” the priorities of which are EU-Kazakhstan economic collaboration and improvement of the Kazakhstan governance system. Western countries and institutions, in their turn, have demonstrated a lot of interest in Kazakhstan and the whole of Central Asia. Therefore, the only real bridge in this connection avoiding the Russian or Iranian route would be via Azerbaijan.

Although Kazakhstan chose to be a part of Eurasian integrational processes by joining Russia-led organizations, its policy towards Azerbaijan is not expected to undergo any drastic changes. In its turn, Azerbaijan also seeks to maintain smooth relations with Kazakhstan, as well as all regional actors, including Russia, Iran, the USA and European Union. This foreign policy is close to the philosophy of the Kazakhstan leadership. In addition to this, the authorities in both countries are very similar in terms of governing the country and appreciating inner stability above everything else.

It is most likely that Azerbaijan-Kazakhstan relations will develop in several main directions in the coming period, one of which is the project for energy and transport corridors, which serves European interests in terms of ensuring energy security and Chinese interests in promoting their new Silk Road Economic Belt, but contradicts Russia’s interests. There is also an opportunity regarding Turkic integration, which is gradually emerging. Although both countries acknowledge the importance of such integration based on common roots, it is proceeding more slowly due to a number of factors.

Kazakhstan’s role in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict

Kazakhstan demonstrated active involvement in the early stages of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, a territorial and ethnic dispute between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh, which is *de facto* controlled by the self-declared Nagorno-Karabakh Republic and totally backed by Armenia, but is internationally recognized as part of Azerbaijan. The conflict began in 1988 and escalated into a full-scale war in the early 1990s. Sporadic tensions and border skirmishes have continued in the region continuously, causing human losses despite an official cease-fire signed in 1994.

In autumn 1991, both Kazakhstan and Russia offered their intensive mediation services. Such an involvement, however, might have been generated by the personality of

Kazakh leader, Nursultan Nazarbayev, who enjoyed great prestige along with Boris Yeltsin of the Russian Federation in the post-Soviet space.

Therefore, both leaders, upon agreement with the Azerbaijani and Armenian sides, took upon themselves the role of mediators. It was the major mediation effort following the internationalization of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

From September 20, 1991, they conducted shuttle diplomacy between Armenia and Azerbaijan. On September 20–23, 1991, the mediating mission led by Boris Yeltsin and Nursultan Nazarbayev visited Baku and Yerevan.

Taking the principles of territorial integrity, non-interference in internal affairs of sovereign states and observance of civil rights as the starting point, a breakthrough was achieved on September 22 when Armenia renounced all its claims to Azerbaijani territory. This allowed the parties to agree to a joint communiqué the next day, committing both sides to disarm and withdraw militias, allow the return of refugees and IDPs, re-establish the Soviet-era administrative order of the Nagorno-Karabakh oblast and set up delegations to find a peaceful solution to the conflict. Soviet army and internal troops would still remain in the conflict zone and the process would be supervised by Russian and Kazakh officials. The peace communiqué was signed by Levon Ter-Petrosian (Armenia), Ayaz Mutallibov (Azerbaijan), Nursultan Nazarbayev (Kazakhstan) and Boris Yeltsin (Russia) (Zheleznovodsk Declaration, 1991). On September 25, the parties signed a cease-fire amid reports of ongoing battles on the front.

When Azerbaijani and Armenian leaders met for follow-up talks on October 25, fighting had intensified. The talks produced little more than an agreement to continue talking. The final blow to the Yeltsin-Nazarbayev peace effort came on November 20 when an Azerbaijani helicopter on the way to peace talks was shot down over Karakend village in the Martuni District in uninvestigated circumstances while carrying Russian and Kazakhstani observers and the Azerbaijani interior minister and deputy prime minister (Eichensehr, Reisman, 1998, p. 54).

Popular demands that the Azerbaijani government respond, led to a blockade of Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh. On November 27, the Azerbaijani Supreme Soviet, in a symbolically important move, annulled the autonomy of Nagorno-Karabakh. By December, Azerbaijan had begun mobilizing for war by nationalizing military hardware and recalling Azerbaijani conscripts from the Soviet army.

The failure of the Yeltsin-Nazarbayev mediation effort, in retrospect, appears unavoidable and overdetermined. Two factors in particular contributed to the failure: (1) all sides lacked centralized control over the military units on the frontlines; and (2) even had they held command authority, it is questionable whether Armenian and Azerbaijani leaders were committed to ending the conflict at this early stage.

As a result, Kazakhstan's intermediation did not last as long as other big powers, such as the United States and France, who have stepped in and assumed the role of mediators within the OSCE Minsk Group since 1994.

However, the endless negotiations mediated by the Minsk Group have not yielded any tangible results for over 20 years. Consequently, many experts and societies in both warring countries, especially Azerbaijan, are demanding the reformation of the Minsk Group.

Some argue that the failure of the Minsk Group has caused the belligerent parties, especially Azerbaijan, to search for more effective mechanisms and new approaches. The replacement of the co-chairs (France, Russia, the United States) of the Minsk Group, or the addition of new ones are the most commonly voiced ideas. As the present mediators would probably not withdraw or terminate their involvement, since their national interests are at stake in the region and they do not want another mediator to undertake initiation, the most feasible proposal is to include new co-chairs in the Minsk Group.

In one of his recent articles, the author of this chapter called Kazakhstan a potential candidate for the co-chairmanship of the Minsk Group should the organization undergo any changes (Huseynov, 2015). A large, Eurasian country and big actor in the post-Soviet area, Kazakhstan suits perfectly the role of mediator in the conflict. While Kazakhstan's titular population is Turkic and shares the same language, religion and roots with the Azerbaijanis, the country itself is a member of several Kremlin-led organizations together with Armenia. It also has a very large population of Russians who share a religion with the Armenians. Therefore, Kazakhstan could be equally close or distant to either warring side. Add to this Kazakhstan's previous experience in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and they are clearly the best choice to join the group and help bring peace to the region.

Some claim that Nursultan Nazarbayev could seek to partially take over the function of holding negotiations between Azerbaijan and Armenia as there is some discomfort over the fact that Russia is the only active mediator in the region and it bears too much responsibility in looking for ways to resolve the Karabakh problem (*Will Nagorno-Karabakh*, 2016).

The fact is that the formula of collective Eurasian security, which is developing in two directions – the northern part of the Middle East and the EEU – is being approved in the Caucasus. In terms of such collective security it would be right if Putin were not the only one who takes part in the negotiations between the leaders of Azerbaijan and Armenia, but that other leaders in the Eurasian space are engaged too, that means, of course, Nazarbayev.

Therefore, on the one hand, they need to ensure the geopolitical vector of displacement of all kinds of western intermediaries from the area and, on the other hand, to form various economic ties between states in the region – not only logistical but also energy ones, because all the major states are involved in either the export or the transit of hydrocarbons. Kazakhstan is also very interested in developing relations with Azerbaijan based on good neighborliness and economic partnership lines and that there will be peace in the Caucasus (*Will Nagorno-Karabakh*, 2016).

Interestingly, during Armenia's accession to the Eurasian Economic Union in 2014, one of the founding states of which is Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev once again openly defended the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan and prevented Armenia from entering the entity with the occupied territories of Nagorno-Karabakh (*Карабах – Назарбаев*, 10.08.2014). It means that Kazakhstan has quite big weight in the post-Soviet space and can influence the developments going on in the region. Therefore, the country's involvement in the settlement and peace process around Karabakh should be considered quite natural.

Turkic Council

The idea of Turkic integration emerged in the early 1990s with the independence of the new Turkic countries from the dying Soviet Union. The major locomotives of the idea were Turkey, which found it a great opportunity for creating its own sphere of influence and Azerbaijan led by the romantic nationalistic Popular Front and its leader Abulfaz Elchibey.

One of the first attempts at such integration was the International Organization of Turkic Culture or *Türksoy* for short (Goble, 2009). It is a cultural entity that incorporates not only independent nations but also non-recognized Northern Cyprus and several autonomies inside Russia and Moldova. However, further development of the idea did not go beyond cultural issues. Due to the lack of self-identity in the newly independent republics, different directions in foreign policy and the presence of other ethnic groups, the initiative faded away and slid off the agenda, although leaders and officials still kept assembling at high level.

However, in the 2000s, the idea was brought back again onto the agenda. As a result, the Turkic Council, an intergovernmental organization, whose overarching aim is promoting comprehensive cooperation among Turkic states was established on October 3, 2009 by the Nakhchivan Agreement signed by Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkey. According to Halil Akinci, the founding Secretary-General of the organization, “the Turkic Council has become the first voluntary alliance of Turkic states in history.”

Within the framework of the organization Kazakhstan hosted two summits (Almaty – 2011 and Astana – 2015) and Azerbaijan one (Qabala – 2013). Each country also hosts the offices for Turkic Council-affiliated organizations: the International Turkic Academy is located in Astana, while the Parliamentary Assembly of the Turkic Speaking Countries is in Baku.

Kazakhstan, due to its central location, size and abundant natural resources, could be a key actor within this organization, however, Turkey with an older and more fundamental statehood, is the central one at present. Azerbaijan is probably the most important country in this alliance, as a bridge that links European and Asian members of the Turkic world on both sides of the Caspian.

Nazarbayev is also the only head of state who has participated in all Turkic summits since 1992. This should come as no surprise, since Kazakhstan, once the most russified of the non-Slavic Soviet republics, has strived to strike a balance between different powers and geopolitical interests. Kazakhstan’s multi-vector foreign policy has been instrumental in serving the nation’s economic interests, as well as avoiding significant tension with any country. The Turkic vector, and particularly multilateral cooperation within the framework of the Turkic Council, is, therefore, viewed as an important dimension diversifying Kazakhstan’s foreign policy “basket” and opening up additional room for maneuver (Bayaliyev, 2014).

At the moment, four out of the six fully recognized Turkic states – Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkey – are in this union. Their combined area is approximately 3.8 million sq. km, the current population is over 100 million. The combined GDPs of the member-states, as of 2016, are USD 900 billion.

The importance of this organization is expected to grow as there is a revival in the Turkic identity and an acknowledgement of its roots. These linguistic and religious roots promise more integration. More steps are taken to get these countries closer. Loosely modeled on the EU, the union has centralized structures (e.g.: parliamentary assembly) and plans for unifying other institutions.

For instance, establishing a unified alphabet for Turkic countries is on agenda. The draft, based on Turkish Latin script, was proposed back in 1993. It is worth noting that Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan acted quickly after the 1991 Soviet collapse to embrace Latin script, Kazakhstan took a more cautious route: it did not want to alienate its large Russian-speaking population. Switching the Kazakh alphabet to Latin is very popular and supported in some circles as it would provide a means for Kazakhs to change the Soviet (colonial) identity, which still largely dominates the national consciousness, to a sovereign (Kazakh) identity. Among the many arguments in favor of switching the Kazakh alphabet to Latin, boosting the national identity of the Kazakh people is the main and decisive one. Cyrillic facilitated and facilitates the orientation of the Kazakh national consciousness towards the Russian language and Russian culture. As a result, Kazakh identity as such remains largely undefined. On this level, moving to Latin will make it possible for Kazakhs to form a clearer national identity (Bartlett, 2007).

For many Turkic nationalists, a revival of Turkic identity could lead in the long-term to the emergence of another global superpower capable to compete with the likes of the United States, China, the European Union and Russia in the heart of Eurasia.

However, too many obstacles hinder this desire. First of all, there is the difference in the socio-economic levels of the member-states and different priorities in foreign affairs. For example, two of the member-states (Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan) are already part of Russia-led geopolitical and military blocs. The interest of big regional actors and their actions to prevent such an alliance should also be taken into consideration.

Moreover, not all independent states (Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan) distance themselves from the union, while dependent Turkic communities in Russia, China, Ukraine, Afghanistan, Iran, Moldova and other countries are not represented in the union, thus undermining the current importance and scope of this alliance.

Economic relations

Brotherly bonds, huge resources, sea borders, the Azerbaijani diaspora in Kazakhstan, the geostrategic position on the historic Silk Road are the main driving forces behind the mutual economic relations between Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan. Trade, industry, energy, transport and agriculture are priority directions of bilateral cooperation.

Today, there is a fairly well-developed legal framework between Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan in the field of economic relations, more than 25 agreements signed on investment protection, avoidance of double taxation and a host of other contracts that have a positive impact on the development of mutual trade.

Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan have been enjoying intensive economic and trade relations, with turnover usually high, but decreasing during crises. Kazakhstan sells Azer-

baijan mostly grain, barley, tobacco, electric equipment, rolled steel carbide, oil and hydrocarbons and natural chemical compounds. Kazakhstan plays an important role in Azerbaijan's food security. The country's annual demand for wheat is 3 million tons (metric tons), half of which was imported from Kazakhstan both in 2015 and 2016 (Qazaxıstanın qadağası Azərbaycanı...).

Meanwhile, major exports from Azerbaijan to Kazakhstan include oil products from bituminous materials, polymers of ethylene, car and machinery components, pumps and hoists of fluids, combined building construction.

Between the years 2001–2011, trade turnover between Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan increased by 2.6 times, reaching USD 276 million, consisting of USD 218 million (increased by 2.2 times) from Kazakhstan to Azerbaijan and USD 58 million (increased by 8.8 times) in the opposite direction.

Table 1

Trade turnover between Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan (by years)

Year	From Kazakhstan to Azerbaijan	From Azerbaijan to Kazakhstan	Total
2005	USD 129 million	USD 3 million	USD 132 million
2009			USD 236 million
2011	USD 218 million	USD 58 million	USD 276 million
2012	USD 340.56 million	USD 52.87 million	USD 393.43 million (Ministry of Economy of Azerbaijan, 2012)
2013	USD 306.76 million	USD 64.23 million	USD 370.99 million (Ministry of Economy of Azerbaijan, 2013)
2014	USD 220.03 million	USD 32.1 million	USD 252.1 million (MFA of Kazakhstan, 2014)
2015	USD 98.92 million	USD 17.96 million	USD 116.88 million (Ministry of Economy of Azerbaijan, 2015)
2016 (January–June)	USD 63.847 million	USD 7.657 million	USD 71.5 million (Statistical Committee of Azerbaijan, 2016)

Source: Statistical Committee of Azerbaijan, 2016.

According to the Statistics Committee of Azerbaijan, the trade turnover between Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan for six months (January–June) of 2016 was equal to USD 71,505,620 (from Kazakhstan to Azerbaijan – USD 63,847,810, from Azerbaijan to Kazakhstan – USD 7,657,810) (Statistical Committee of Azerbaijan, 2016).

Table 2

Major export products of Kazakhstan to Azerbaijan (2016)

No.	Product	Amount (in USD)
1	Natural gas (gaseous)	19,129,780
2	Wheat products	12,523,450
3	Crude oil and bituminous materials from the raw oil products	12,154,330
4	Rolled steel	8,088,870
5	Natural barium sulphate (barite)	3,571,440

Source: Statistical Committee of Azerbaijan, 2016.

Table 3

Major export products of Azerbaijan to Kazakhstan (2016)

No.	Product	Amount (in USD)
1	White sugar and sucrose	4,100,860
2	Ferrous metal products	1,063,300
3	Furniture and furniture components	306,020
4	Optical media (discs for laser reading systems) and others	287,150
5	Tomato products	150,590

Source: Statistical Committee of Azerbaijan, 2016.

At a business forum in 2013, it was revealed that 37 companies operating with Kazakh capital were represented in Azerbaijan, while 46 companies with Azerbaijani capital have been registered in the western region of Kazakhstan alone (*Azərbaycanla Qazaxıstan arasında...*).

In 2014, Aktau hosted a Kazakh-Azerbaijani business forum featuring officials and business circles from both countries. According to the data revealed in the forum, Kazakh investments in Azerbaijan's economy amounted to USD 5.2 million in 2002–2013. The investments flowing from Azerbaijan into Kazakhstan were much higher; USD 132.8 million just in 2011–2013 (Эфендиев, 2014).

As of 2016, more than 700 operating companies with Azerbaijani capital have been registered in Kazakhstan, some 60 companies with Kazakh capital have been registered in Azerbaijan (Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan to mull, 2016). Those companies were mostly engaged in the spheres of trade, transport, industry, agriculture, services, banking, insurance and construction.

Investments by Azerbaijani companies in Kazakh economy have exceeded USD 130 million since 2005, while the relevant figure for 2013 came to USD 40 million (AZPROMO).

The most recent – 13th Azerbaijan-Kazakhstan intergovernmental commission on economic cooperation, which has been functioning since 1999, was held in Astana in September 2016. The event was co-chaired by Azerbaijani energy minister Natig Aliyev and his Kazakh counterpart Kanat Bozumbayev. The agenda for the session included issues on collaborating in a number of areas, including economy, energy, transport, agriculture, environmental protection and culture. They also discussed issues regarding migration, the space industry, high technology, science and education. Transportation of Kazakh oil and oil products to the world market through the territory of Azerbaijan was also the focus of attention (*Azerbaijan-Kazakhstan intergovernmental*, 2016).

Economic relations will acquire greater scope after the inception of the largest projects on both sides of the Caspian Sea. Both Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan are eager to be key actors in the shortest East-West transport corridor, given their favorable geographic location as a bridge between Europe and Asia. Currently, energy and other goods produced in Kazakhstan are carried to Europe via Azerbaijan. Launching the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railroad, which is a priority for Azerbaijan in terms of enhancing the capacity of the transit corridor, opens up promising prospects for Kazakhstan as well. The exploitation of huge reserves of Kashagan and Tengiz oil deposits further create demand for this corridor. The

increase in the westward flow of Kazakh oil and other goods will make Kazakhstan an interested party in this field. The new international port of Baku, after the commissioning of the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars project, as well as development of transport infrastructure in Kazakhstan, will serve further development of cooperation in this field and increase the importance of these countries as a transit corridor. And this, in turn, will not only boost the economies of both parties but also attract foreign companies and capital into this region.

Energy and transport projects

Energy and transport projects have been key issues in Azerbaijan-Kazakhstan relations since the 1990s: Kazakhstan's major goal was to obtain secure access to Western markets for exporting its hydrocarbon resources. Azerbaijan offered itself as a reliable transit bridge in this direction.

The first attempt at a common energy project was made in 1997, when the Memorandum of cooperation on transportation of Kazakh oil to world markets was signed by the leaders of the two countries. However, the idea gained more impetus when an Azerbaijan-Georgia-Turkey oil pipeline became feasible.

The relevant Ankara Declaration was adopted in October 1998 by President of Azerbaijan Heydar Aliyev, President of Georgia Eduard Shevardnadze, President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev, President of Turkey Süleyman Demirel and President of Uzbekistan Islam Karimov. The declaration was witnessed by the United States Secretary of Energy Bill Richardson, who expressed strong support for the pipeline. The intergovernmental agreement in support of the pipeline was signed by Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey in November 1999 in Istanbul. At the summit, the Government of Kazakhstan documented its interest in participating in the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline (Aydin, Erhan, 2004, p. 137).

The Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline, which has been an irritating issue since its conception for the likes of Russia and Iran who have interests in the region, is a product of the balanced policy for Azerbaijan. Participation in the pipeline also helped Kazakhstan to diversify its multi-vector foreign policy.

The pipeline is supplied with oil from Azerbaijan's Azeri-Chirag-Guneshli oil field in the Caspian Sea. The project is also a great opportunity for Kazakhstan, as it offers to deliver oil from Kashagan and other oil fields in Central Asia.

In 2006, Nursultan Nazarbayev signed an agreement on Kazakhstan's accession to the project (*Kazakhstan hops*, 2006). The following year Kazakhstan's national company KazMunayGas concluded a memorandum of understanding on creating a Trans-Caspian system for transporting oil which would make it possible to dispatch Kashagan and Tengiz oil through the Eskene-Kyrik-Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan line. The plan was to transport 25 million tons of oil annually in the initial phase, increasing to 38 million tons later. Design, construction and commission of the project were to be confined to the beginning of production in the Kashagan field in 2010–2011, but Kazakhstan encountered difficulties in development. Moreover, opposition from both Russia and Iran also created obstacles for the Trans-Caspian project.

However, Kazakhstan started transporting oil to the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline by tanker, across the Caspian Sea in 2008.

2012 was a year of intense negotiations on the fate of the Trans-Caspian oil pipeline. In the context of the unresolved legal status of the Caspian Sea and the lack of consensus between member-states regarding the financing of the project components of the project, the issue was never realized.

During the most recent meeting of the Azerbaijan-Kazakhstan Intergovernmental Commission on Economic Cooperation, which was held in Astana in September of this year, delivering Kazakh oil and oil products to world markets via Azerbaijan was again the key issue of the agenda, as transporting hydrocarbon raw materials through the Trans-Caucasian corridor is one of the main directions of the current cooperation. 2.9 million tons of oil, oil products and liquid gas were transported from Kazakhstan to the port of Batumi, Georgia, through the territory of Azerbaijan in 2015. The relevant figure for the first six months of the present year is 1.6 million tons (*Qazaxistan-Azərbaycan*).

The parties agreed to explore joint opportunities in terms of energy projects, to expand cooperation in the delivery of oil and oil products, aimed at the diversification of routes from the Caspian region to the world and European markets, as well as issues of transport through the Batumi Oil Terminal liquefied petroleum gas of Azeri origin.

According to the latest news, Kazakhstan may start oil exports from its large Kashagan field through Azerbaijan in 2017. Noting that “Kashagan oil may be transported by means of Azerbaijan’s railways or pumped through pipelines of the country,” Kazakh Energy Minister Kanat Bozumbayev said that the volume of production is expected to increase in the short term (*Kashagan oil*, 2016).

Kashagan is a large oil and gas field in Kazakhstan, located in the north of the Caspian Sea. The geological reserves of Kashagan are estimated at 4.8 billion tons of oil. Total oil reserves amount to 38 billion barrels; some 10 billion of which are recoverable reserves. There are large natural gas reserves at the Kashagan field – over one trillion cubic meters. The preliminary volume of production will stand at 75,000 barrels per day (*Kashagan to produce*, 2016).

Kazakhstan’s generally proven reserves of hydrocarbons account for 5.5 billion tons of oil and 3 trillion cubic meters of gas. In other words, it is possible for the country to produce 33.6 billion cubic meters of gas and 80 million tons of oil annually, however, the country has no guaranteed independent, reliable and secure oil export route except the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) pipeline (*Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan to lay*, 2016). Even though Kazakhstan utilizes different pipelines for exporting its oil, they are considered insufficient to meet the export potential.

Therefore, the Kazakh authorities are focusing on the Kazakhstan Caspian Transportation System (KCTS) or trans-Caspian route. The KCTS envisages construction of the Eskene-Kuryk-Baku pipeline with a length of 739 kilometers. The feasibility study of the Eskene-Kuryk section of the pipeline envisages construction of an oil pumping station at the Tengiz field, the Tengiz-Oporny-Uzen-Aktau main oil pipeline, an oil terminal and a new port in Kuryk village, as well as reconstruction and expansion of the port in Aktau. The construction of this pipeline will enable Kazakhstan to export its oil to ports in Georgia and Turkey. The initial capacity of the new pipeline will amount to 23–25 mil-

lion tons per year with the possibility of future expansion to 56 million tons (*Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan are planning*, 2016).

The KCTS is to ensure the export of Kazakh oil to international markets mainly from the Kashagan field (second and third phase) via the Caspian Sea, through the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline and other oil transportation systems both in Azerbaijan and other transit countries.

These plans may be postponed due to problems with the development of the Kashagan field. In the best case, Kazakhstan will be able to produce 20 million tons in the field per year by 2020. They will be able to reach the level of commercial production, which is 75,000 barrels per day for Kashagan, only at the end of this year, only 5 million tons are planned for 2017. According to some experts, less than one-fifth of this amount will be delivered to foreign markets. Nevertheless, the development of Kashagan opens up a new route for Kazakh-Azerbaijani oil cooperation (*Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan to lay*, 2016).

As we can see now, the transportation of Kazakh oil via Azerbaijan fell sharply due to a drop in oil prices. Therefore, we should not expect that significant volumes of Kazakh oil will be delivered to world markets via Azerbaijan in a short time, claim some experts.

Kazakhstan participates in another important endeavor of the Azerbaijani government, the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway system. This project is set to complete a transport corridor linking Azerbaijan to Turkey (and therefore Central Asia and China to Europe) by rail. The line is expected to transport an initial annual volume of 6.5 million tons, rising to a long-term target of 17 million tons (Uysal, 2014).

Although mainly three countries (Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey) are involved in this project, several other railway systems which are under construction or under discussion in other countries may extend the coverage of Baku-Tbilisi-Kars line. Kazakhstan completed a west-east rail connection, which may be a strong alternative for connecting Turkey to China via the Caspian Sea. Two new lines, Zhezkazgan-Beyneu and Arkalyk-Shubarkol, both of which will strengthen Kazakhstan's position especially in transit loads by rail, were opened in 2014 (Uysal, 2014).

The Zhezkazgan-Beyneu railway is 988 km long, creating a continuous corridor in an east-west direction. This new line shortens the distance for loads transported from China to the Caspian Sea by 1000 km. Although the section between Zhezkazgan and Saksaulskaya may also aid the China-Europe railway connection via Russia, the complete lines will surely play a key role in the alternative route from China to the west via the Black Sea. After the completion of the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway project, Turkey will have an alternative connection via the Caspian Sea to Kazakhstan and China, which is called the "Iron Silk Road" in Turkey (Uysal, 2014).

The other newly opened line is the Shubarkol-Arkalyk railway, 214 km long with a south-north trajectory. That link provides a connection from central to northern Kazakhstan. That line may be an alternative route to the currently used China-Russia-Europe connection via Astana (Uysal, 2014).

Launching the new railroads will not only give an impulse to the development of Central and Western Kazakhstan, but also will increase the transit potential of the trans-Kazakhstan transport corridors passing from China in the direction of Russia and further Europe.

Once the Marmaray tunnel in Turkey is opened, the BTK railway could connect to the European railway system, which will undoubtedly help integrate the South Caucasus with the European economic space.

According to the Kazakh ambassador to Azerbaijan, both Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan plan to become large transit hubs. He noted that the Silk Road project through Kazakhstan and the Caucasus will enable the transit of goods from China to Europe in 12–15 days, while currently it takes 30–45 days by sea. “Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey are interested in developing such methods of transportation,” he added. Azerbaijan is now finalizing the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway project and the construction of a large seaport near Baku (*Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan develop*, 2015).

New ferries will run between the Baku International Sea Trade Port in Alat and the port of Kuryk in Kazakhstan, which is currently under construction. Cargo transshipments through Alat increased by over threefold, which is linked with the increase of cargo transportation on the Baku-Aktau-Baku route. Both the already operating and new ferries will run between the ports of Baku and Kuryk. Moreover, a free trade zone will be created at the Kuryk port following the example of Baku. The ferry complex in Kuryk is considered a strategically important object as it will allow the transport of goods to neighboring countries without unloading cars. The new ferry terminal is expected to allow the country to export oil, polyethylene, iron ore and concentrates to world markets through Baku, Azerbaijan (*Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan to launch*, 2016).

The ferry complex is due to be commissioned in December 2016. The capacity of the port is expected to reach the amount of 4 million tons of freight per year (*Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan to launch*, 2016).

The Baku International Sea Trade Port is located in the Alat settlement, 65 kilometers south of Baku. The construction of the Baku International Sea Trade Port started in November 2010. Being located at a crossroads of Europe and Asia nearby important markets such as China, Turkey, Iran and Russia the new port has huge opportunities to become one of the leading trade and logistics hubs of Eurasia. The free trade zone to be created here is expected to make a huge contribution not only to the economy of Azerbaijan, but the whole region (*Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan to launch*, 2016).

The transport corridor created by Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan is gaining more importance not only regionally, but globally, as China has initiated the creation of a new silk road that will link Asia and Europe.

Interestingly, Chinese President Xi Jinping was the first to announce the initiative to create a transport and trade corridor (the Silk Road Economic Belt) between Central Asia and Europe during his visit to Astana, Kazakhstan, in September 2013.

The new route is believed to allow the redirection of cargo flows in an eastern direction, bypassing the territory of the Russian Federation, which has banned the transit of any goods from Ukraine through its territory, regardless of the country of final destination (*First container*, 2016).

Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan are ideal partners for construction of the Belt due to their favorable location en route from East to West, within the convergence area of Europe, Russia and China and for their interest in large-scale transnational transportation systems. Azerbaijan usually strives to find a balance between the EU and Russia, while Kazakhstan, just like other Central Asian countries, does the same thing between Russia

and China. With China's continuous growth, the convergence point of the three circles will move westward and the position of Azerbaijan, as well as the western shore of the Caspian Sea, will become a new joint area.

Azerbaijan is the pivotal country in the China-Central Asia-West (CCW) economic corridor. This corridor is one of the Belt and Road's six economic corridors, involving Central Asian countries, Iran and the Gulf region, Transcaucasia and Turkey and the Arabian Peninsula. Traditionally, transport between China and West Asia takes place mainly through maritime routes, whereas the CCW corridor is a land-based alternative to traditional maritime routes. The shortest route from China to West Asia is going via Baku. To date, the railways leading to the ports of Aktau and Turkmenbashi have opened up and cargo may be transported by ferry to the new Baku International Sea Trade Port, and then westwards onto Turkey and Europe (Lianlei, 2016).

In August 2015, Azerbaijan received the first container train from China, which is a pilot train on the Trans-Caspian international transportation route. The container train proceeded from China to the port of Aktau in Kazakhstan, from where it was transferred to the capital of Azerbaijan.

In addition, the port of Turkmenbashi in Turkmenistan, which connects to a railway running from Kazakhstan, provides an alternative route and is therefore a competitor to the Aktau option. The competition between these two ports on the eastern shore of the Caspian Sea has undoubtedly strengthened the position of Baku as a transport hub. The North-South Transport Corridor (NSTC), currently under development, has Azerbaijan as a joint point connecting Russia and Iran and is designed to provide Indian Ocean countries with land-based access to Europe and Central Asia. Once complete, the NSTC will further consolidate the geo-economic role of Baku.

In January 2016, a trial container train linking Ukraine to China through the Black and Caspian Seas departed from the Baku International Sea Trade Port to Aktau, Kazakhstan. The container train, which consists of 20 containers, delivered cargo from Illichivsk, Ukraine, to Dostyk, a Kazakh city on the Chinese border within 11–12 days (*First container*, 2016).

In October 2016, the railway administrations of Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Georgia signed a memorandum on the Trans-Caspian International Transport Route Association and adopted its charter. The Association will aim at attracting transit and foreign trade cargo to the route, as well as at the development of TITR's integrated logistics products. The association's office will be located in Astana. The entity is expected to develop an effective tariff policy, optimize the costs and value of integrated services, create a single technology for the transportation process, facilitate the reduction of administrative barriers linked with border and customs procedures and processing of cargo and containers in the ports (*Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Georgia*, 2016).

The participants in the meeting also discussed the establishment of competitive rates for TITR. The parties agreed preferential tariff rates within the territories of the TITR participating countries for a number of export-oriented Kazakh goods, including grain, petroleum products and nonferrous metals (*Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Georgia*, 2016).

The Trans-Caspian international transportation route runs through China, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan and Georgia, and then through Turkey and Ukraine to Europe. The project enjoys an opportunity to become one of the most attractive and profitable routes

for consignors from European countries, while approximately 300,000–400,000 containers are expected to be transported via TITR by 2020, bringing huge financial profits to all participating countries. Given the potential of the iron Silk Road to shorten the Sino-Europe transportation time to six days, the potential of the NBIST port as a pivot has attracted significant attention from China (*Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Georgia*, 2016).

Speaking of the Chinese transport and logistics projects in this region, it is worth mentioning one of the most ambitious initiatives of Beijing. In August 2015, the mass media reported China's grandiose plans to construct a bridge over the Caspian Sea which could become one of the main channels of the Silk Road Economic Belt. Nevertheless, it is still unknown how real the implementation of such a large-scale infrastructure project could be.

The Silk Road initiative aims at reviving a route that connects China and Europe via Central Asia and the Middle East, as well as a path through Southeast Asia and Africa. Critics from countries including Kazakhstan and India say the main purpose of the plan is to boost China's geopolitical influence and export China's excess industrial capacity to overseas countries. Doubts also exist over the feasibility and security risks of the initiative (Shi, 2016).

While Beijing insists its Silk Road plans are not a geopolitical gambit, some parties are wary of China expanding its economic presence. The creation of financial architecture to fund "One Belt, One Road" – including the USD 40 billion Silk Road Fund and the USD 100 billion Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank – met resistance from Washington and Tokyo. In Russia, which is promoting its own integration project, the Eurasian Economic Union, China's plans received a cold reception and were "perceived as 'they're trying to steal central Asia from us,'" says Alexander Gabuev at the Carnegie Moscow Centre think-tank (Farchy, 2016).

International logistics projects are an effective tool to enter new markets, which is especially important in the time of crisis in the economies of Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan. They possess unique opportunities to intensify bilateral trade and to recover trade turnover through international transport corridors. At the same time, in the face of declining world prices for energy resources, it is important to increase the volume of trade of non-raw goods, which seems much more difficult. The Chinese government has identified the Belt as a priority of foreign affairs and will inject sustainable resources to advance it. Given these favorable conditions, the Belt can become a long-term project from which Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan stand to benefit (Lianlei, 2016).

The first dividend from the interconnection is a streamlined trans-Eurasia transportation system. The main focus is on East Asia and the Western Europe, while Central Asia and the South Caucasus act as a bridge between the two. The streamlined trans-Eurasia transportation will first benefit the transit countries, for which transit fees could offer a significant source of fiscal income. This has been demonstrated by Kazakhstan's experience, where the transit fee reached USD 1 billion in 2014. Azerbaijan has not yet reached its full potential as a transit state; however with the development of the trans-Caspian transport system and NSTC, Azerbaijan will benefit from its position as a hub on the western shore of the Caspian Sea. According to estimates, the trans-Caspian route alone could transport approximately 300,000–400,000 containers by 2020, bringing hundreds of millions of manats in profit for Azerbaijan (Lianlei, 2016).

Azerbaijani diaspora in Kazakhstan

The Azerbaijani diaspora in Kazakhstan is one of the most significant ethnic groups in Kazakhstan. According to unofficial data, around 100,000 Azerbaijanis live in Kazakhstan, while others claim this figure to be at most at 300,000 (*Azərbaycan-Qazaxıstan münasibətləri*, 2010). However, the 2012 official statistics informed about 93,490 ethnic Azerbaijanis living in Kazakhstan. In his interview in 2012, the Kazakh ambassador to Azerbaijan mentioned that over 130,000 people of Azerbaijani origin reside in his country (Primbetov, 2011).

In the early 20th century, the number of the Azerbaijanis in Kazakhstan was quite low: according to the 1926 Soviet All-Union census, only 46 Azerbaijanis were present in Kazakhstan (Solonets, 2013).

The formation of the Azerbaijani diaspora in Kazakhstan started in the 1930s, when thousands of Azerbaijanis were expelled from Azerbaijan and sent to the Kazakh steppe during Stalin's Great Purge. In the 1939 census, 12,996 Azerbaijanis were living in Kazakhstan (Solonets, 2013).

The second wave of emigration took place in 1944, when the ethnic Azerbaijanis of Georgia, another Soviet republic, were resettled in Kazakhstan. Finally, a third wave took place in the mid-1950s, when thousands of enthusiastic young people arrived in Kazakhstan during the Virgin Land Campaign (Sidelnikova, 2007).

According to official figures, some 15,000 Azerbaijanis were living in Kazakhstan at the turn of the 1950–60s. In later years, this number would only grow: 56,166 in 1970, 73,345 in 1979 and 90,083 in 1989 (Solonets, 2013). The main areas of employment of Azerbaijani migrants were construction, services and trade. A number of prominent specialists also came to Kazakhstan to create new production facilities, research and development of mineral deposits. In general, the Azerbaijani population of Kazakhstan increased 6.9 times between 1939 and 1989.

In the postwar period, a tendency of assimilation of Azerbaijanis was noticed during their integration with the local society. Between 1950 and the first half of the 1980s, immigrants from the Caucasian republics, not being able to create cultural and educational institutions, could scarcely preserve their national identities. For migrants from Azerbaijan who were fluent in Russian and adhering to a secular life, it was relatively easy to adapt to the social and cultural environment of Kazakhstan. The absence of ethnic communities also contributed to the loss of a sense of national belonging.

A new wave of migration to Kazakhstan was caused by severe socio-economic and ethno-political processes in Azerbaijan at the end of the 1980s–1990s. The main reasons for the mass migration of Azerbaijanis at that period were the ethnic conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh and the economic crisis in Azerbaijan accompanied by mass unemployment and falling living standards. In this regard, the majority of migrants were Azerbaijani refugees who left their homes in Armenia and Armenian occupied Azerbaijani territories from the border with her Azerbaijani regions (Solonets, 2013).

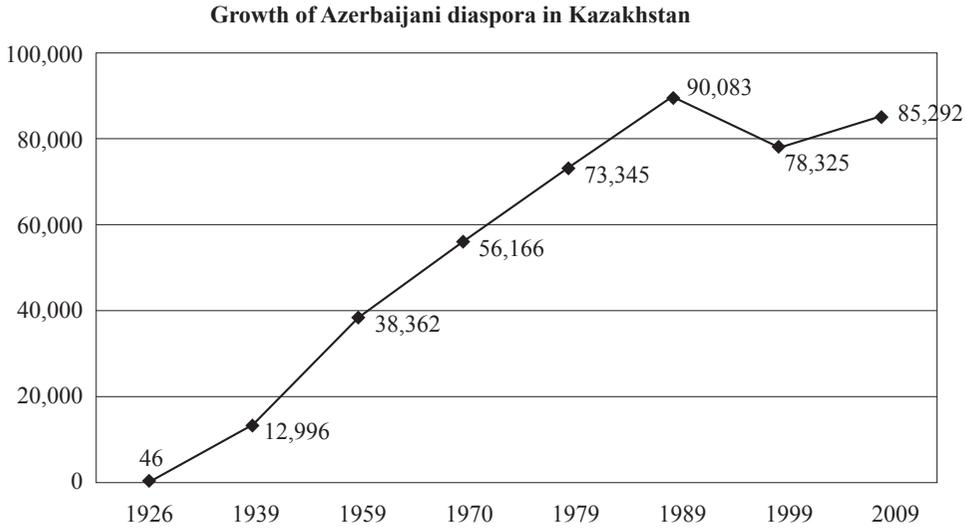
A huge influence on the increase in the influx of migrants was exerted by personal connections between visitors and representatives of the Azerbaijani diaspora on Kazakh soil. Wealthy members of the Azerbaijani community would help their relatives and friends with resettlement and employment. Migration factors resulted in the formation of

compact living groups of Azerbaijanis in many regions of Kazakhstan (Solonets, 2013).

Due to the beginning of the oil boom in Azerbaijan in the 1990s, some diaspora members left Kazakhstan to return to the home country. However, by 2009 increased natural growth helped offset losses from emigration and even exceeded them.

Chart 1

Changes in the numbers of the Azerbaijani population of Kazakhstan



Source: Solonets, 2013.

The processes in the aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Union created favorable conditions for the revival of the national identity of the Azerbaijanis living in Kazakhstan. One of the main directions of preserving ethnic identity was their active involvement in cultural life. In the 1990s and early 2000s, national cultural centers that seek to preserve the Azerbaijani language and traditions emerged in various cities of Kazakhstan.

In May, 1992, an Azerbaijani cultural center “Turan” was registered in Almaty, Kazakhstan. Its organizational charter set out the following aims: to promote the improvement of ethnic relations in the Republic of Kazakhstan and the active involvement of Azerbaijanis in all spheres of social and cultural life. In a short time, similar Azerbaijani cultural centers appeared in other regions of Kazakhstan: “Azeri” in Zhambyl, “Vatan” in Pavlodar, “Heydar” in Kostanai, “Dostluk” in Mangistau, “Gobustan” in Almaty, “Nakhchivan” in Taldykorgan, etc. Since June 2007, a trilingual newspaper (Azerbaijani, Kazakh and Russian) has been published by “Vatan” (Sidelnikova, 2007).

The activities of these organizations are aimed at carrying out cultural and sports activities, opening schools, releasing periodicals in the Azerbaijani, Kazakh and Russian languages. Some communities in the Almaty and Pavlodar regions have also launched Sunday schools, which offer the Azerbaijani language, literature, history, customs, traditions and art. Besides Kazakh holidays, significant Azerbaijani dates such as 28 May (Republic Day), 20 January (Black January) and 31 December (Solidarity Day) are also

celebrated by the Azerbaijanis in Kazakhstan. At the same time, the national-cultural centers, attracting representatives of the Azerbaijani diaspora to participate in citywide and nationwide cultural events, promote its integration into the local community (Sidelnikova, 2007).

Currently, Azerbaijanis live in all oblasts, but mainly in South Kazakhstan, Zhambyl, Almaty and Kyzylorda. These regions were the destinations of the first wave of the forced relocation. Their descendants are now old-timers among the Azerbaijani diaspora who have integrated into Kazakhstan most fully. They live close together in the villages of Southern Kazakhstan, they are well rooted in the country and are traditionally engaged in agriculture. But Azerbaijanis in Kazakhstan are also widely employed in industry, trade and services, too.

Despite the large number, the Azerbaijani community does not have a big influence in Kazakhstan's political life. At the moment, one Azerbaijani – Maharram Maharramov (Kazakhstan Communist Party) is serving in the Kazakhstan parliament. Another Azerbaijani Maarif Farajov is a member of a local self-government body (Qazaxıstan Parlament Məclisinə...).

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Stosunki Azerbejdżan–Kazachstan: obecna sytuacja i perspektywy

Streszczenie

Azerbejdżanu i Kazachstanu nie należy postrzegać jako dwóch państw, które są bliskie sobie tylko ze względu na radziecką przeszłość. W rzeczywistości zamiskujące Azerbejdżan i Kazachstan grupy etniczne – Azerowie i Kazachowie – pochodzą z większej rodziny narodów tureckich. Braterstwo azero-kazachskie datuje się od samych początków narodów tureckich, które rozprzestrzeniły się z Gór Ałtaju i zostało ugruntowane przez czynnik islamski.

Mające wspólną granicę morską na Morzu Kaspijskim Azerbejdżan i Kazachstan są dla siebie ważnymi narodami. Azerbejdżan jest postrzegany jako pomost dający Kazachstanowi dostęp do Turcji i Europy, zaś Kazachstan oferuje Azerbejdżanowi połączenie z Azją Centralną i Chinami.

Oba państwa przywiązują wielką wagę do swoich wzajemnych relacji, zarówno dwustronnych, jak i w ramach organizacji międzynarodowych. Relacje te stale się rozwijają i w przeciągu ostatnich dwudziestu pięciu lat trend ten nie zmienia się, ani nie napotyka żadnych przeszkód. Kazachstan uznał

terytorialną integralność Azerbejdżanu, co stanowi dla Azerbejdżanu ważne osiągnięcie wobec obecnego konfliktu z sąsiednią Armenią. Oba kraje szybko osiągnęły nawet porozumienie w sprawie statusu prawnego Morza Kaspijskiego, podczas gdy w innych krajach nadmorskich podobnych porozumień nie udało się wypracować. Oba państwa są zainteresowane rozwojem korytarza transportu i energetyki Wschód–Zachód, pozwalającego wykorzystać ich korzystną lokalizację geopolityczną, dzięki której mogą służyć jako pomost między kontynentami.

Słowa kluczowe: Azerbejdżan, Kazachstan, Alijew, Nazarbajew, Górny Karabach, tureckie, kaspijskie, ropa