

## **Kazakhstan-Uzbekistan Relations Post 2015**

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### **Abstract**

The period post-2015 has witnessed a remarkable transformation in Kazakhstan-Uzbekistan relations, marked by a departure from historical tensions and a surge in diplomatic initiatives. With NursultanNazarbayev in Kazakhstan and ShavkatMirziyoyev assuming the presidency in Uzbekistan, the two Central Asian nations have actively pursued a path of enhanced cooperation. This abstract encapsulates the evolving dynamics, highlighting the multifaceted improvements in economic collaboration, regional stability efforts, and strengthened people-to-people ties. The study explores the diplomatic breakthroughs and policy adjustments that have contributed to this shift, providing insights into the strategic recalibration of both nations in the global context. As Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan navigate this new chapter, understanding the post-2015 developments in their bilateral relations becomes imperative for comprehending the geopolitical landscape of Central Asia. The analysis not only sheds light on the strides made in cooperation but also underscores the potential for sustained collaboration, contributing to the broader narrative of regional diplomacy and cooperation.

### **Introduction**

The post-2015 period has been pivotal for the evolution of Kazakhstan-Uzbekistan relations, witnessing a transformative shift in the dynamics between these two Central Asian nations. Historically, the relationship was characterized by tensions, often stemming from border disputes and competition for regional influence. However, with NursultanNazarbayev leading Kazakhstan and ShavkatMirziyoyev assuming the presidency in Uzbekistan, a new era of diplomatic engagement and collaboration emerged, reshaping the geopolitical landscape of Central Asia.

The introduction of this study contextualizes the historical backdrop of Kazakhstan-Uzbekistan relations, emphasizing the challenges and opportunities that defined the pre-2015 era. It acknowledges the geopolitical significance of these nations within the Central Asian region, where historical ties, shared cultural affinities, and strategic interests intersect. The leadership transitions in both countries during this period played a crucial role in steering the bilateral relationship towards a more cooperative and mutually beneficial trajectory. As Nursultan Nazarbayev's tenure in Kazakhstan coincided with Shavkat Mirziyoyev's assumption of power in Uzbekistan, their leadership dynamics became instrumental in fostering a positive momentum. The introduction explores how these leaders, recognizing the potential for collaboration, sought to overcome historical impediments and build a foundation for enduring cooperation. Additionally, it outlines the broader geopolitical context, including the changing dynamics of global politics and the increased interest in Central Asia, which further underscores the significance of understanding the post-2015 developments in Kazakhstan-Uzbekistan relations.

The study aims to disentangle the intricacies of this diplomatic transformation, analyzing key policy shifts, joint initiatives, and the resulting impacts on economic, political, and cultural ties. By delving into the nuances of the post-2015 period, this research seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of how Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan navigated a path towards strengthened cooperation, contributing to regional stability and reshaping their roles in the broader international arena.

### **Importance of the Study**

This study holds paramount importance in unravelling the complexities and implications of Kazakhstan-Uzbekistan relations post-2015. The significance lies in the unprecedented nature of the diplomatic transformation during this period, marked by a departure from historical tensions. Understanding the intricacies of this evolving relationship is crucial for policymakers, analysts, and scholars seeking insights into the dynamics of Central Asia, a region with strategic geopolitical importance. The improved relations between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan have far-reaching consequences for regional stability and cooperation. This study provides a nuanced analysis of the key factors contributing to this positive shift, including leadership changes,

diplomatic initiatives, and joint projects. By comprehensively examining the post-2015 developments, the research sheds light on the mechanisms that facilitated cooperation, enabling stakeholders to identify successful strategies and potential pitfalls in fostering diplomatic ties between neighbouring nations. The study contributes to the broader discourse on international relations by exemplifying how historical tensions can be overcome through diplomatic efforts and shared interests.

### **Different area of Kazakhstan-Uzbekistan Relations**

As the 21st century commenced, the delineation of the international border between Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan reached a notable milestone, with approximately 96% of the border already determined. The year 2001 marked a significant turning point as both nations, through mutual agreements, successfully resolved all but three disputed areas—Bagys, Arnasai, and Nsan—where the precise border line had yet to be drawn. Demonstrating diplomatic commitment, the governments of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan engaged in concerted efforts, and by September 2002, they achieved a comprehensive resolution, finalizing the course of their extensive 2,440 km-long shared border. This successful collaboration culminated in the ratification of the border demarcation treaties on March 28, 2023, solidifying the agreed-upon boundaries and contributing to the establishment of clear and mutually recognized territorial limits between the two countries. This achievement not only exemplifies the diplomatic prowess of both nations but also fosters an atmosphere of stability and cooperation in the region.

Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan share a diverse and multifaceted relationship that spans various sectors. Rooted in historical and cultural ties, the two Central Asian nations have built strong economic cooperation, particularly in sectors like energy and transportation. Joint efforts in developing infrastructure, such as road and rail networks, enhance regional connectivity and promote economic development. The energy sector is a key aspect, with both countries actively participating in Central Asian energy markets. Additionally, collaboration on water management and environmental issues, particularly concerning shared rivers like the Syr Darya, underscores their commitment to sustainable resource use. Security cooperation, including counterterrorism efforts, strengthens regional stability, while cultural and educational exchanges contribute to

people-to-people connections. Diplomatic engagements at bilateral and multilateral levels, along with participation in regional organizations, further solidify their relationship. Addressing border and territorial issues remains a part of ongoing diplomatic discussions. In essence, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan's multifaceted relations reflect a commitment to mutual prosperity, regional stability, and shared development goals in Central Asia.

### **Literature Review**

**Barinková, E. K. N. (2019).** The development of foreign trade relations between Kazakhstan and the EU has been significantly influenced by geopolitical changes. As Kazakhstan strategically positions itself as a key player in Central Asia, geopolitical shifts have had profound impacts on its trade dynamics with the EU. With the EU's interests in diversifying energy sources and accessing Central Asian markets, Kazakhstan's rich energy resources have become a focal point of trade relations. Geopolitical tensions, such as those surrounding Russia's influence in the region, have occasionally strained Kazakhstan-EU trade ties. Moreover, initiatives like China's Belt and Road Initiative have presented both opportunities and challenges for Kazakhstan's trade with the EU, altering traditional trade routes and dynamics. The evolving geopolitical landscape continues to shape the nature and scope of trade relations between Kazakhstan and the EU, influencing strategic decisions and partnerships on both sides.

**Mukasheva, Z. Y., & Akhmedyanova, D. K. (2017).** The evolution of the bilateral partnership between the European Union (EU) and Kazakhstan is evident through the analysis of key agreements such as the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) and the Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (EPCA). A content analysis of these agreements reveals the deepening of cooperation across various sectors including trade, energy, governance, and human rights. The PCA, signed in 1995, laid the foundation for cooperation between the two parties, focusing primarily on political dialogue and economic cooperation. With the signing of the EPCA in 2015, the partnership entered a new phase, marked by enhanced cooperation in areas such as justice, education, and environment.

**Collins, N., & Bekenova, K. (2017).** Kazakhstan's energy policy plays a central role in fueling the "New Great Game," a term often used to describe the geopolitical competition for influence and resources in Central Asia. As one of the world's largest producers of oil and natural gas, Kazakhstan holds significant strategic importance in global energy markets. The European Union (EU) has been keenly interested in diversifying its energy sources and reducing dependence on Russian supplies, making Kazakhstan an attractive partner. Kazakhstan, in turn, sees the EU as a crucial market for its energy exports, offering economic opportunities and geopolitical leverage.

**Collins, N., & Bekenova, K. (2017).** Kazakhstan's energy policy is a pivotal factor in the geopolitical dynamics of the "New Great Game" in Central Asia, particularly in its relations with the European Union (EU). As one of the world's major oil and natural gas producers, Kazakhstan holds significant sway in global energy markets. The EU, seeking to diversify its energy sources and reduce dependence on Russian supplies, views Kazakhstan as a crucial partner. Conversely, Kazakhstan sees the EU as a vital market for its energy exports, offering economic opportunities and geopolitical leverage. Collaboration between Kazakhstan and the EU in energy matters is evident through agreements such as the Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (EPCA), focusing on energy security, infrastructure development, and sustainable energy initiatives. geopolitical complexities, including Russia's influence and competition from other global powers like China, continue to shape the dynamics of Kazakhstan-EU energy relations, underscoring the intricate interplay of interests in the region's energy landscape amidst the "New Great Game."

**Bekenova, K., & Collins, N. (2019).** The media portrayal of the European Union (EU) in Kazakhstan reflects a complex interplay of perceptions, influenced by various factors such as historical ties, geopolitical considerations, and economic interests. While some segments of the Kazakh media depict the EU favorably, highlighting its role as a partner in economic development, technology transfer, and democratic reforms, others adopt a more critical stance, emphasizing perceived challenges such as cultural imperialism, interference in domestic affairs, and unequal economic relations. Furthermore, media coverage often reflects Kazakhstan's broader geopolitical alignment, with outlets aligning their narratives with the country's strategic partnerships and alliances. For instance, media outlets with closer ties to Russia may portray the EU in a more negative light, emphasizing perceived competition or ideological differences.

Overall, the media portrayal of the EU in Kazakhstan is multifaceted, reflecting the country's diverse interests, alliances, and perceptions within the context of its evolving geopolitical landscape.

### **Delimitation and Demarcation of Borders between Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan**

Territory stands out as a fundamental characteristic of any state, and in Central Asia, a region characterized by diverse nationalities with shared historical roots, addressing the common challenge of delimitating and demarcating state borders is paramount (Jonboboev et al., 2014).

The demarcation of borders serves as a critical measure against irregular migration, as well as the trafficking of drugs and arms, posing not only a substantial threat to individual states but also to the global community amidst the era of globalization (Idrisov, 2000). The complexities surrounding border delineation have persisted throughout the intricate web of interstate relations. This matter has been a persistent agenda item since the states achieved political independence and garnered recognition from the world community, solidifying their status as distinct entities, both de jure and de facto, actively participating in global political developments.

The administrative border spanning over 2200 kilometers between Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan was delineated based on internationally accepted principles, particularly the 'utipossidetis' principle. This principle, encapsulated in maintaining original borderlines during legal succession, implies the resolution of existing issues through peaceful interstate negotiations.

The delimitation process between Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan unfolded in two stages. Initially, 96% of the total border length was delimited, and the corresponding agreement was inked by the presidents of both nations on November 16, 2001, in Astana. However, approximately 4% of the border sections remained unresolved. Further contacts in 2002 led to the completion of interstate negotiations regarding these remaining sections, including areas such as Bagys and Turkestanets settlements and the Arnasay Dam. In September 2002, the presidents of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan signed the 'On Separate Sections of the Borderline between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan' agreement. It is noteworthy that while the 2002 Delimitation Agreement addressed the fate of some disputed territories, it did not comprehensively regulate the status of all near-border settlements.

### **Features of political dialogue between countries**

During the period of their independence, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan have established a framework of regulatory and legal agreements to govern their bilateral relations. Notable among these are the Treaty of Eternal Friendship signed in 1998 and the Treaty on Strategic Partnership inked in 2013.

With the ascent of ShavkatMirziyoyev to power in Tashkent, there has been a substantial increase in visits and meetings between the leaders of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. This heightened diplomatic engagement is reshaping the landscape of interstate cooperation. A noteworthy positive development occurred with ShavkatMirziyoyev's visit to Nur-Sultan, the capital of Kazakhstan, on December 6, 2021. This visit marked the first state visit since Mirziyoyev's inauguration and involved discussions on regional security issues, underscoring the continued priority of relations with Kazakhstan in Uzbekistan's foreign policy.

The visit aimed at elevating the bilateral ties to a new qualitative level, emphasizing the desire to enhance the relationship between the two neighboring nations. A significant outcome of the visit was the signing of a declaration on allied relations, a historic event that has the potential to strengthen the foundation for a qualitatively new and robust partnership between the two countries.

The recently signed declaration between Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan introduces key provisions aimed at fostering closer ties, notably the establishment of the Supreme Interstate Council, the Council of Interparliamentary Cooperation, and the Council of Foreign Ministers for both nations. Beyond institutional norms, the declaration places a significant emphasis on deepening trade and economic relations, which serve as the foundational bedrock for the bilateral relationship.

A pivotal aspect of the agreement is the directive to enhance trade and economic cooperation, with the goal of increasing the volume of mutual trade to \$5 billion in the coming years and up to \$10 billion in the medium term. Heads of state have tasked their respective governments with implementing measures to achieve these targets.

This declaration carries immense regional importance, extending beyond the bilateral relationship. The strengthening of ties between Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, coupled with the establishment of a robust legal and institutional framework, is poised to have a positive impact on multilateral cooperation in the broader context of emerging regional security in Central Asia. The collaborative efforts outlined in the agreement are expected to contribute to the overall stability and prosperity of the region.

### **Conclusion**

The examination of Kazakhstan-Uzbekistan relations post-2015 reveals a transformative journey marked by diplomatic breakthroughs, economic collaboration, and enhanced regional stability. The leadership transitions, with Nursultan Nazarbayev in Kazakhstan and Shavkat Mirziyoyev in Uzbekistan, played a pivotal role in steering the two nations toward a cooperative trajectory, overcoming historical tensions. The positive developments in this period, as explored in this study, underscore the importance of diplomatic engagement and the pursuit of shared interests. The joint initiatives in energy, trade, and infrastructure have not only strengthened bilateral ties but have also contributed to the broader stability of Central Asia. This research further emphasizes the significance of understanding and learning from successful diplomatic transformations in the international arena. As Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan navigate this era of increased collaboration, the study's insights provide valuable lessons for policymakers, diplomats, and scholars on fostering enduring relationships in regions marked by historical complexities. As both nations position themselves on the global stage, the post-2015 developments in Kazakhstan-Uzbekistan relations serve as a testament to the potential for positive change and cooperation. The study contributes to the ongoing discourse on international relations by highlighting the role of leadership, shared interests, and diplomatic initiatives in reshaping the geopolitical landscape of Central Asia.





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