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Belgium priority as a partner for the Republic of Kazakhstan

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Abstract

This article aims to examine the relationship of Kazakhstan with the European Union with regard to theoretical methodologies such as the analysis of literature and authors' opinion, analyses of official juridical documents and statistics data. As a result, Partnership and Cooperation Agreements between Kazakhstan with the EU and Belgium as well has created the potential for the transition of bilateral cooperation to a qualitatively new level. Belgium is considered as one of diplomatic, trade-economic and investment partners' priority because of its geographical position as a gate to Europe, and its central location closely connects it with the main European economies.

Key words: Kazakhstan, European Union, Belgium, partner, relations.

Prioridad de Bélgica como socio de la República de Kazajstán

Resumen

Este artículo tiene como objetivo examinar la relación de Kazajstán con la Unión Europea con respecto a metodologías teóricas tales como el análisis de la literatura y la opinión de los autores, análisis de documentos jurídicos oficiales y datos estadísticos. Como resultado, los acuerdos de asociación y cooperación entre Kazajstán con la UE y Bélgica también han creado el potencial para la transición de la cooperación bilateral a un nivel cualitativamente nuevo. Bélgica se considera una de las prioridades de los socios diplomáticos, comerciales y económicos y de inversión debido a su posición geográfica como puerta de entrada a Europa, y su ubicación central la conecta estrechamente con las principales economías europeas.

Palabras clave: Kazajstán, Unión Europea, Bélgica, socio, relaciones.

1. INTRODUCTION

Invaluable achievement of the young state - the Republic of Kazakhstan (RK) - is national sovereignty, security and its preservation which can be determined as the main condition in the creation of the developed democratic state, and according to the Constitution of the country, the people of Kazakhstan, their right and freedom are proclaimed as the supreme values. Together with it, the priorities in the field of the national interests and national objectives of the young state are remained its territorial integrity and security from the outside,

internal stability and public consent, and also such cultural and economic development of the country which would provide its high competitiveness in the conditions of a world market economy. From the moment of its formation, the republic clearly demonstrates its foreign policy course as readiness for a constructive dialogue, aspiration for the achievement of mutual trust, development of equal partnership with the countries aimed at implementation of the progressive ideas connected with the state development. The peaceful orientation of the policy and rejection of the actions, violating the international standards and law, are reflected in "The strategy of formation and development of Kazakhstan as sovereign state". Today Kazakhstan, thanks to the active policy, built on the balance between domestic and foreign policy, gained deserved authority in the opinion of the world community, and as the subject of the international relations - the country gained image of the reliable political and trade-economic partner for many countries of the world. The advantageous geographical and geopolitical position of Kazakhstan, which territory is located in the center of Eurasia, allows to develop large international transit and transport communication business in the country, connecting Europe and Asia by the airways, railways and motorways. Moreover, due to continued measures for ensuring favorable investment climate and, respectively, the international political rating, the country looks attractive in the opinion of the world community for implementation in its territory of joint trade and economic activity. At the same time, Kazakhstan's subsoil is rich with minerals and natural resources, it takes the leading place in the world on reserves of oil, gas, and coal and uranium ores. However, it in overwhelming degree

determines a binding of foreign economic activity of the country to the raw sector of the economy. In this regard, the new course of economic development, designated in the Address of the President the Republic of Kazakhstan N. Nazarbayev "New possibilities of development in the conditions of the fourth industrial revolution", providing diversification of national economy and withdrawal from raw dependence, allows to expand the economic potential of the country that will serve further as a key factor in the development of the Kazakhstan post-industrial society, thereby strengthening national sovereignty.

It is also promoted by the principle of multi-vector nature in the foreign policy of Kazakhstan, allowing to counter balance the influence of forces of various geopolitical centers on the political and the socioeconomic situation in Kazakhstan and Central Asia in general. For the first time the idea of multi-vector nature found its reflection in the first Kazakhstan concept of foreign policy, developed in 1995, according to which the unconditional priority was given to relationship with neighboring states. The principle and advantages of multi-vector nature are noted by the Kazakhstan's statesman K.K. Tokayev:

The foreign policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan is characterized by such qualities as the balance and multi-vector nature, assuming pragmatism in the choice of foreign policy partners, high degree of maneuverability, lack of direct dependence of Kazakhstan's foreign policy on unpredictability of development of the situation in this or that region, from change of an environment of the world market (2018: 23).

The aim of this article is to examine the development of the EU-Kazakhstan partnership, to analyze its major problems and to identify the prospects of its future progress by discussing the applicable provisions of (a) the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between the European Communities and their Member States and the Republic of Kazakhstan of January 23, 1995 (PCA) that currently serves as the legal foundation of the EU-Kazakhstan relations (b) The new agreement about partnership between the Republic of Kazakhstan and the European Union which was signed on December 21, 2015 in Astana (c) a number of other legal instruments that govern the collaboration between the EU and Kazakhstan.

2. METHODOLOGY

During this investigation both positive and neo-institutional approaches were used. The positive approach serves for explaining things as they really are, and we used it with a view the European Union, in particular Belgium, and its potential relations with Kazakhstan. With this purpose, the following theoretical methods were applied:

- Analysis of literature and authors' opinions
- Analysis of official juridical documents
- Analysis of official statistics data

3. DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

In January, 2014 the Republic of Kazakhstan accepted the new concept of foreign policy for 2014-2020. Taking into account the changed situation, the priority direction was determined (together with development of integration and regional processes) deepening of bilateral cooperation with the main partners of Kazakhstan, among them the EU (European Union). History of our relations with the EU is marked with a spirit of constructivism and cooperation, based on mutual respect and trust. The President Nursultan Nazarbayev always notes that the countries of the European Union — are the key partners of Kazakhstan. And it is very important that all these years had passed under the sign of the high level of interest of the parties in development of dialogue and positive dynamics of deepening of interaction on a wide range of issues (Tokayev, 1998). The priority directions are remained the mutual trade and ensuring access of the Kazakhstan production for the European markets, the power engineering, transport communications, medicine, ecology, science and education, innovative technologies, processes of democratization and questions of human rights.

As the state, having importance in international policy and adhering to the position of consolidation of peace and stability in the Central Asian region and on all Eurasian space, today RK seeks for expansion of diplomatic relations and establishment of the long-term relationship on the basis of effective cooperation with many countries of the East and West. Undoubtedly, at present in the relations between the states, the economic factors will be played the increasing role.

Cooperation between the Republic of Kazakhstan and the European Union was not the exception; the economic sphere is determinative in our relationship today. Suffice it to say that for these years investments from the countries of the European Union were made more than 100 billion dollars (\$ billion). In the context of formation of the Republic of Kazakhstan as a key partner of the European powers in the region of Central Asia, the importance of deepening of economic interaction for Kazakhstan is obvious. First of all, this is due to the fact that today, the European Union is one of the main economic centers of the world and the most advanced, trade-economic integration association (Tokayev, 2001). The foreign trade turnover of Kazakhstan with EU countries for January-March, 2018 was made \$ 9 billion (January-March, 2017 — \$ 6,8 billion). From January to December, 2017 this figure was made \$ 30 billion (export — \$ 24,2 billion, import — \$ 5,7 billion) that corresponds to 49,8% of the total amount of foreign trade of RK of \$ 60,2 billion. For 2017 gross inflow of foreign direct investment from EU reached \$ 9,8 of \$ 20,7 billion of all attracted. The main investor countries are: Netherlands (\$ 4,4 billion), Belgium (\$ 960,6 billion), France (\$ 595,3 billion), Great Britain (\$ 418,8 billion), Germany (\$ 280,8 billion) and Luxembourg (\$ 276,8 billion). Commodity turnover between Kazakhstan and EU countries in January-February, 2018 was made \$ 5,5 billion that is 32,6% higher, than for the same period of previous year (\$ 4,2 billion).

Export from Kazakhstan to EU countries for January-February, 2018 increased by 35,2% and was made \$ 4,7 billion. Import to RK from EU countries in January-February, 2018 increased by 19,6% and

was made \$ 837,7 billion. In many respects development of the Kazakhstan and European economic relations is determined by mutual interests in the oil and gas sector. Political and economic stability of our country raises its role as alternative supplier of these resources for the EU. Now Kazakhstan is the third after Russia and Norway the supplier of energy resources to Europe from among the countries which are not members of the OPEC. Besides, an important component of cooperation is increasing relationship with the European countries within the implementation of the program of infrastructure development "Nurly zhol" and also the second stage of the Program of industrial innovative development. It seems important participation of the European companies in the modernization of key branches of the industry and infrastructure of Kazakhstan, the attraction of the advanced investments and technologies, establishing co-productions, construction of the transport corridors, passing across the territory of Kazakhstan in the present and the future, connecting violently developing Chinese economy with the European market. It is also necessary to note the importance of cooperation in environmental protection. The Republic of Kazakhstan and the European Union can find joint ways of solutions of the problems connected with climate change. There are important the questions of global security, problems connected with terrorism, extremism, the international organized crime, drug trafficking and weapon (Ibrashev and Yensebayeva, 2001). Thus, coincidence of interests of Kazakhstan and the European Union concerning establishment in the region of Central Asia of stability, sustained economic growth, security and prosperity predetermines our active partnership on all range of the regional agenda.

Among the European states, the Kingdom of Belgium is considered one of the key political and trade-economic priorities of the foreign policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan. From the moment of the establishment of diplomatic relations political and economic cooperation dynamically develops that especially promotes the top-level confidential relations. Brussels, where key institutes of the united Europe are located, assumes an extensive dialogue in the context of the new expanded partnership of Kazakhstan and the European Union. However, our country is interested in official Brussels not only as the capital of the European Union. It seems important the bilateral relations of Kazakhstan and Belgium as well. Today Belgium is one of the striking examples of successful political adaptation and flexibility in questions of the state construction. The capital of Belgium possesses one of the leading positions in the development and distribution of the all-European mentality. But at the same time, Belgium is the only federal state of Western Europe, which is characterized by the existence of acute unresolved ethno political territorial issues. It is shown clearly by a political crisis after the federal parliamentary elections in June, 2007 when for the first time in the history of the country within nine months it was not possible to create the coalition government. It is possible to attribute to the competitive advantages of Belgium the territorial location, advanced infrastructure, the presence of highly qualified personnel in all spheres of the industry and economy with the high level of knowledge of several foreign languages. Most strengths of the Belgian industry are such branches as: economy, pharmaceuticals, chemical industry, petrochemistry, the gas sector, the port industry, dredging works (Belgium – #1 in the world in

this sphere), the industrial equipment and mechanical engineering, agro-industrial and food branches, the diamond sector and also development and introduction of new technologies. The condition of innovative development of Belgium traditionally is among the most advanced EU countries in respect of innovative development, conceding only to the Scandinavian countries, Switzerland, Germany, the Netherlands and Ireland. The best results of Belgium in the sphere of innovations are caused by its long-term policy, directed to support of innovative processes in national economy and stimulation of hi-tech productions.

Belgium has traditionally adhered to a policy of open economy which in turn strongly depends on international trade. Thereby, the feature of the Belgian economy is expressed in its orientation on the attraction of the foreign countries. The policy of Belgium is directed to the attraction of foreign investments and ensuring the free movement of financial means. Belgium uses a number of mechanisms for the attraction of investments among which the leading role is assigned to regional and branch business missions. The government of Belgium in every possible way encourages the inflow of new foreign investments for increase in employment rate in the country, besides it conducts various activities aimed at stimulation and increase in the volume of investment from abroad, making great efforts on increase in the possibilities and improvement of conditions for local and foreign investors, doing investment climate in the country more attractive (Sagintayev, 2018). The country has the highly developed industrial economy with intensive industrial production and agriculture, also

well-developed transport infrastructure, big cities and ports of the European and international importance, the large industrial enterprises and the plants. It possesses broad external economic relations. More than 50% of industrial and agricultural products are exported. Belgium is one of the leading world exporters of ferrous and non-ferrous metals. It is one of the world leaders in the chemical industry. The most developed branches of mechanical engineering are car assembly, electro-technical and radio-electronic. The Belgian aerospace companies are specialized in niche production, taking the leading positions in this or that direction. The main branch of the energy sector is atomic. In Belgium there are two NPP (7 power units). The leading branches of the Belgian industry are the chemistry, mechanical engineering, microelectronics, pharmaceuticals, biotechnologies, metallurgy, the diamond-brilliant complex (DBC), automotive industry, the aerospace sector, an agro-food complex and some other. According to data of National Bank of Belgium as of April, 2017, GDP of Belgium following the results of 2016 reached 411,859 billion euros. Thus, in 2016 GDP growth was made 1,2%. In 2015 inflation was at the level of 1,8%. In 2016 the number of employed in the country was made 4660,6 thousand people (63,4% of the economically active population). In 2016 the unemployment rate was a little decreased in comparison with 2015 and was made 7,8%. The total number of the unemployed in Belgium in December 31, 2016 was made 552,8 thousand people. In 2016 the public expenditures reached 210,048 billion euros (51,0% of GDP), and state revenues – 209,636 billion euros (50,9% of GDP). In 2016 the budgeted deficit was at the level 2,8% of GDP.

Generalizing all above-mentioned, it is possible to conclude that modern Belgium is characterized by the open market connected with large economies of the world. From the position of the geographical factor Belgium is gate to Europe, and its central location closely connects it with the main European economies. December 31, 1991 the Kingdom of Belgium officially recognized the state sovereignty of the Republic of Kazakhstan that was served as the beginning of the Kazakhstan-Belgian relations. The foundation of the bilateral relations was the official visit of the President N. Nazarbayev to Belgium, which took place in February, 1993, during which there were taken place negotiations with the King Baudouin I and the Prime Minister Jean-Luc Dehaene, and the Declaration on bases of relationship between two countries was signed. From the moment of the establishment of diplomatic relations (August, 1992) the Kazakhstan-Belgian cooperation has been developing dynamically and fruitfully and in 2017 it was celebrated as anniversary of 25 years from the date of establishment of diplomatic relations (WTO, 2017). Political contacts between two countries actively develop, characterized by intensity and constructive dialogue. From the moment of the establishment of diplomatic relations there were taken place 7 visits of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan to Brussels (February, 1993, June, 2000, November, 2002, December, 2006, April and October, 2010, October, 2014). From the Belgian side, in 1998 Kazakhstan at the highest level was visited by the Prime Minister of Belgium Jean-Luc Dehaene and Crown Prince (now King) of Belgium Philippe (2002, 2010). Undoubtedly, the economic sphere is determinative in our relationship today. Active trade-economic and

investment interaction is reflected visually in an annual gain of volumes of bilateral trade and the increasing volume of investment. In 2015 commodity turnover between Kazakhstan and Belgium was made \$ 265,1 billion, of them export – \$ 100,3 billion and import – \$ 164,7 billion. The economy of Belgium is diversified and is relied generally on small and medium-sized businesses and innovations. Agriculture and the food industry are very developed. Belgium is one of the leaders in the field of nuclear power. Considerably, Belgium and Kazakhstan economies are complementary. In 2015 the Belgian direct investments in economy of Kazakhstan were made \$ 608,5 billion. The total amount of the Belgian direct investments to Kazakhstan for the last five years was \$ 3,7 billion, in this connection Belgium became the 5th largest European investor in the Kazakhstan economy (Barlybayev, 2016).

Now in Kazakhstan more than 35 companies with participation of the Belgian capital are registered. The largest among them are: "Sarens Group" (infrastructure of oil and gas branch), "Maxx Intermodal Systems" (transport logistics), "Ahlers Bridge" (shipping, logistics, and customs services), "Atlas Copco" (equipment for oil and gas and mining branches), "TD Williamson SA" (service of oil and gas pipelines), "Meura SA" (brewing) and others. There are supported close contacts with the Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry (CCI) of Belgium, uniting more than 40 CCI in the country and abroad. Active cooperation is conducted with the Walloon agency on export and foreign investments (AWEX), Flemish trade investment agency (FIT) and capital association "Brussels Exporters" (Zhol,

2014). Non-ferrous metals, wool, textiles and textile products, base metals and products from them, production of chemical and adjacent to it industries, generally export to Belgium. Kazakhstan imports machinery and the equipment, mechanisms, the electro-technical equipment, mineral production, optical, photographic and other devices and apparatuses, textile products, production of the food industry, tobacco, production of chemical and adjacent to it industries. It is important to note that Brussels is interested in expansion of power cooperation with supplying countries of hydrocarbonic raw materials and considers Kazakhstan as one of important, reliable and perspective partners in this area. As Belgium is poor in mineral raw material resources, the extracting sector practically does not function now. Extraction of coal is completely stopped in the 80th years of the XX century. Volumes of annual import of oil fluctuate around 30 million tons. In Belgium, the developed petroleum refining industry is produced diesel fuel and gas-oils (38% of total production), liquid fuels (15%) and automobile petrol (14%). The large world companies of oil processing branch are: "Chevron", "ExxonMobil", "Shell", "Kuwait Petroleum", "LUKOIL", and "Total". A considerable part of them has the main production capacities in the territory of the country. Kazakhstan, in turn, is interested in advanced technologies and innovations in traditional and "green" power. Belgian experience on the development of renewable sources: wind power, the sun and water, in general, in the sphere of power industry is interesting. According to the National Action Plan for renewable energy for 2010-2020, Belgium much attention is paid on balance of economic and social interests, including environmental problems, and development of the energy

sector according to the purposes: reduction of energy consumption made from fossil sources; reduction of emission of carbon dioxide; reduction of dependence of the country on energy import; minimization of the consequences of the high volatility of the world prices for energy carriers; creation of jobs in innovative sectors of the economy to which is belonged the renewable power; improvement of the mechanisms of the market functioning.

The country applies a set of legislative and financial measures for the development of electricity production from renewable sources. These measures have to provide by 2020 a share of the electric power, made from renewable sources of 13-20% of all energy balance. By 2050 the European Union countries have to produce 40-62% of energy at the expense of renewable sources (Arkabayeva, 2016). In this context, it seems important the implementation of projects between Astana and Brussels, which expand the format of energy dialogue in a number of the directions, for example, in the field of increase in power-efficiency and energy saving, application of renewable energy sources, use of atomic energy in the peace purposes, development of power industry and clean power technologies. One of such projects was cooperation with one large Belgian metallurgical company from Liege which has over 4,5 thousand employees worldwide and 200-year history of activity. The company will plan to construct the 400 megawatts gas turbine power plant in Kazakhstan. Effective use of water resources, development of renewable power industry, decrease in air pollution and water and also improvement of the environment and ecological quality of life – all these activities of the international

company coincide with the policy of our state in this sector. The gas turbine power station will be constructed within the implementation of the plan of the President of Kazakhstan "Strategy – 2050" on increase in electric powers of Kazakhstan in the cleanest, environmentally friendly way. It will allow to provide in 2 years with the electric power over one million consumers and it is not the only project (Kazpravda, 2016). A successful policy of Brussels in the sphere of developments and introductions of advanced technologies and existence of rich raw material resources in Kazakhstan are good conditions for creation of a mutually advantageous partnership at a qualitatively new level. In recent years the growth of activity of business of two countries is observed. Trade and economic missions are more and more intensively carried out in various cities of Kazakhstan with the participation of the Belgian businessmen and officials. It is observed constantly increasing interest of the Belgian companies in the development of trade relations with the Kazakhstan partners and it affects a big range of the branches: industry, agriculture, public health, transport, construction. Special attention is paid to such perspective directions as projects in the field of sustainable sources of energy, environment protection, processing and recycling.

From the point of view of the Belgian investors, the main advantage of Kazakhstan is the stability of conditions and predictability of the state reforms. Also important role plays position and a role of the country in the region in general, in particular, for the companies which are not focused on the industrial production of consumer goods. Special interest is connected with the existence of

many unused opportunities. Along with a wide range of the state initiatives of concrete practical support of investors, it creates a favorable environment for development of business in the sphere of production with high extra cost that traditionally is strength side for economy of Belgium. Stimulation for the Belgian investors is the openness of Kazakhstan to the advanced international experience and also the existence of the large-scale reforms and projects, aimed at the development of the balanced and steady economy (Kazinform, 2016). The particular importance has the issues of cooperation between Kazakhstan and Belgium in the field of innovation, science, education and competitiveness. Today, thousands of Kazakhstan students and specialists have the training and pass the practical study in higher educational institutions of the European Union and Belgium according to the “Bolashak” program. Together with it, Kazakhstan, which is aimed at the development of truly polyethnic and polylingual society, has the basis for reflection concerning studying of experience of national language development in Belgium, as in the country there are recognized as official languages: Dutch, French and German. Also the relations are developed in the cultural and humanitarian sphere, expressed in particular, in holding various exhibitions, concerts, symposiums, the presentations, seminars and conferences in both countries. So, in November, 2014 within the world tour for the first time in Belgium in the city of Antwerp there was taken place the performance of the State opera and ballet theater "Astana Opera" in which 190 Kazakhstan actors participated (Elmanova, 2010). Besides, the Belgian side on the constant basis holds various cultural events, directed on the acquaintance of the Kazakhstan public with the rich

cultural heritage of Belgium. For example, in November 2016, in Astana there was taken place the exhibition of lithographs of the most famous surrealist of the Belgian fine arts René Magritte. The legal basis of development of the relations of the Republic of Kazakhstan with Brussels and at the level of its relations with the European states on the bilateral basis, first of all, is based on "The new agreement about partnership between the Republic of Kazakhstan and the European Union" which was signed on December 21, 2015 in Astana, and it was opened the new milestone in the relations of our country and the EU, and with Belgium as well. The EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs Federica Mogherini and the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan Erlan Idrisov countersigned the agreement of the second generation. It was succeeded the previous Partnership and Cooperation Agreement signed in 1995 (Zhigalov, 2007). In addition, there are a number of bilateral documents. For example, the Convention on avoiding double taxation and preventing non-payment of taxes on income and property (capital), the Agreement on cooperation and administrative mutual assistance in customs affairs between the Republic of Kazakhstan and Belgium, concluded on the bilateral basis. This legal base has created the potential for the transition of bilateral cooperation to a qualitative new level and also was led to the intensification of political dialogue between Belgium and Kazakhstan.

4. CONCLUSION

In general, the political dialogue existing between the parties, based on mutual understanding and trust, are the good basis for building of all directions of bilateral cooperation which is built taking into account the interests of two states. It is necessary to emphasize that Belgium considers Kazakhstan as the reliable political and trade-economic partner, playing the important role in ensuring regional stability and security. Questions of non-proliferation and ensuring global and regional security, inter-parliamentary cooperation, inter-civilizational dialogue are remained priority and potential spheres of interaction; in the economic part: energy, agrarian sector, aerospace, scientific and technical cooperation, transit-transport and innovative spheres, in particular involvement of advanced technologies, "green power", development of scientific and technical cooperation. Besides, despite obvious results of bilateral cooperation, it is necessary to consider the achievements only as a serious base for realization of their powerful potential, which is quite big, both Kazakhstan with Belgium, and Kazakhstan with the European Union. Adhering to the current tempo, cooperation between Kazakhstan and the European Union and also Belgium will surely develop in the direction of comprehensive, strategic and mutually advantageous partnership in the next years.

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