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WHAT LED KAZAKHSTAN TO THE JANUARY PROTESTS IN
2022? REAL CAUSES, CONSEQUENCES AND
RECOMMENDATIONS

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Abstract:

This thesis examines the political, economic, and legal decisions of the government of the Republic of Kazakhstan since independence, which led to political stagnation and mass protests throughout the country. Mass protests in January 2022 have clearly shown the real gap between the government and people. The protesters, who at first asked for a reduction in gas prices, began to demand the resignation of the government. This was facilitated by the foreign and domestic policy of the government. In particular, this includes the irremovability of power, a high level of corruption, stagnation in development in the social spheres, and other reasons that led to the impoverishment of the population. The constitutional amendments, along with high-profile cases, proved the political dependence of the parliament and the courts on the President. The one-party system of government with a permanent leader did not stand up to criticism, so the development of democratic institutions, the opposition, and freedom of speech was often persecuted. Some political changes have been made as a result of the protests, but the main power of influence still remains in the hands of certain individuals. Unfortunately, the first President Nazarbayev and his associates, who went through the Soviet political school and life, failed to build democracy in Kazakhstan. There are some positive developments, but many issues have not yet been resolved. Will Kazakhstan be able to get out of this situation and what needs to be done for this? The thesis considers possible developing ways of the political situation as well as makes recommendations to improve the current situation and avoid the previous mistakes.

Keywords: Kazakhstan, January protests 2022, political changes, irremovability of power, legal changes, new Kazakhstan, opposition, freedom of speech, constitutional amendments.

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Acronyms and definitions

ACLED: The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project.

Akim - regional or city mayor in Kazakhstan.

Akimat - regional and city mayor's offices in Kazakhstan.

Akorda - Presidential Palace. The official workplace of the President of Kazakhstan.

CIS: The Commonwealth of Independent States.

CSTO: The Collective Security Treaty Organization.

DCK: Democratic Choice of Kazakhstan.

DPR: The Donetsk People's Republic.

EAEU: The Eurasian Economic Union.

KIBHR: Kazakhstan International Bureau for Human Rights and Rule of Law.

LPR: The Luhansk People's Republic.

Majilis - the lower chamber of the Parliament of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

Nur Otan - the ruling political party of Kazakhstan. Renamed Amanat in 2022.

Radio Azattyq RFE/RL - the Kazakh Service of the international media company Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty.

SCO: The Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

Senat - the upper chamber of the Parliament of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

Z patriots - informal name for supporters of the Russian invasion to Ukraine. “Z” is associated with the symbolism that the Russian army marked on its military equipment.

Introduction

1.1 Introduction of the political situation in Kazakhstan

In January 2022, large-scale protests took place in Kazakhstan since independence in 1991 and lasted about 10 days. A wave of demonstrations demanding lower gas prices that began in the western city of Zhanaozen immediately gained support across the country. The Kazakh government used to crack down on unauthorized demonstrations, but in this case, they were stopped after the entry of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) troops. A protest rally in the most populated city of Almaty turned violent, accompanied by clashes between security forces that led to civilian deaths. The government was forced to declare a state of emergency and curfew. Later, President Tokayev announced that it was an attempted coup d'état to seize power, initiated by 20,000 terrorists. The constitutional referendum, including constitutional laws granting additional privileges to the first president, created a super-presidential form of power in Kazakhstan. Persons close to the President, the so-called Nazarbayev team, have been appointed to all leading positions in the country. From time to time they just changed places among themselves. The family of the first President, as well as his associates, had special privileges in society. It is not surprising in this situation that the richest people in Kazakhstan are closely connected with the name of the first president. All this led to the creation of a cult of personality and political stagnation. The cult of personality in Kazakhstan in its current form is an imposed and unpleasant legacy of the Soviet Union. The leaders of many former Soviet republics, including Kazakhstan, began to apply the Soviet experience of management, taking into account their past political experience under Soviet rule. The peak of the cult of personality in Kazakhstan was the renaming of the capital Astana to Nur-Sultan in honor of the first President. According to this review, Kazakhstan has become more democratic than the Soviet Union, but there are signs of an authoritarian regime. Some ministers and akims of that time did not agree with such a policy and founded an independent opposition. Opposition activities have been actively pursued by the authorities since 2003. An example of this is the activities of the Democratic Choice of Kazakhstan party, whose members were arrested, killed, or migrated to western countries. High-profile cases such as the murder of the opposition leader Nurkadilov, and Sarsenbayuly have proven the level of independence of the judiciary. Additionally, the discontent among the population was caused by police brutality and arbitrary detention during protests in the Mangistau region in 2011, land protests, and protests related to the renaming of the capital.

One of President Tokayev's most important statements during the protests was: "The government will not fall." It was a clear message that it would not be possible to remove power in Kazakhstan by force. In fact, it did not fall, but there were some political changes. Changes include the resignation of the government under the leadership of Prime Minister Mamin and the elimination of the status of the first president as well as the arrests of former influential politicians and businessmen. President Tokayev has explained the concept of "New Kazakhstan" which considers deep-rooted democratic transformations in the country¹. Even if the government led by Prime Minister Mamin has resigned, many governing positions are still occupied by former politicians who brought the country to such conditions. Considering the main reasons for the January protests, Kazakhstan requires significant political and economic reforms aimed at changing the current state policy. The chapter analyses the most important outcomes of the January protests such as the involvement of the citizens in their political life, which was not there before. A positive consequence is that the state has begun to take action to change the situation and take responsibility for it. The current super-presidential form of government has proved its inefficiency. If the majority of the current government remains in power, the situation will not improve for the better. The parliament should reconsider many details of governance, starting with the appointment of local akims and ending with the election of the president. One of the main conditions for sustainable development is the independence of judicial reform, which requires significant reforms in the case of Kazakhstan.

1.2 Structure of the thesis and methodology

The thesis examines the main problems of the democratization process in the Republic of Kazakhstan. The aim of the work is to identify the main causes of the discontent of the population that led to the protests, as well as possible recommendations for avoiding these mistakes in the future. The thesis uses reports and ratings of independent international organizations for a transparent assessment of the democratic situation in Kazakhstan. During the writing of the thesis, for a detailed study, as well as for understanding the internal opinion from Kazakhstan, a survey was conducted among the citizens of the Republic of Kazakhstan. The survey was conducted anonymously and consisted of ten questions. In each question, there were three suggested answers and one free answer in case of disagreement with the suggestions. One hundred twenty four citizens of the Republic of Kazakhstan took part in the survey at my invitation, from Ulytau, Atyrau, Turkestan regions and the capital Nur-Sultan.

¹ See the official announcement of the President Tokayev from 16 March 2022.

Since the survey was not conducted in all regions of the country, covering the vast majority of the population, it cannot be represented as the situation of the population as a whole. The results of the thesis survey are given as the internal opinion of some Kazakhstanis. The survey was conducted in Kazakh and Russian, and the results were provided in the original and with translation into English. The analysis of each question in the thesis is done depending on the chapter and the issue under consideration. Based on research, theories, and survey, the first and second chapters of the thesis discuss the main reasons that led Kazakhstan to the January protests. The chapter defines the reasons for the formation of the cult of personality, the irremovability of power, and the persecution of democratic institutions. During the demonstration itself, the protesters had other demands besides lowering gas prices. Starting from the resignation of the government, the protesters have had social, economic, political, and legal demands. Hence the question arises: *Apart from the increase in gas prices, are the January protests in Kazakhstan the result of the irremovability of power and the persecution of democratic institutions?*

The third chapter of the thesis is devoted to the January protests as an event. In addition to political and social issues, the chapter considers the demands of the protesters and government-society relations. The fourth chapter is focused on the changes after the January protests and the Russian influence on Kazakhstan's politics. Taking into account the reasons, consequences, and outcomes of the January protests as well as current geopolitical situation, the thesis considers certain recommendations aimed to improve political situation in the Republic of Kazakhstan. The Government is trying to make new changes, but they have not yet proved their effectiveness. Another question arises here is: *what should the current Government do to improve the domestic and foreign political situation in the country?*

Chapter1. The Soviet Union and early Kazakhstan.

The chapter contains three subparagraphs on the legacy of the Soviet Union, the experience of the former Soviet republics, and constitutional amendments. The first subparagraph, on the legacy of the Soviet Union, examines the established dictatorships in the Soviet Union and their impact on the development of all other previous republics. The democratic development of Georgia and Ukraine was viewed as the experience of the former Soviet republics. The Rose and Orange revolutions, including other protests in the countries, brought them to a different path of development compared to other states. Countries that had similar political experiences, due to several reasons and circumstances, had different points of view on certain issues. Issues such as citizenship, community, and location have had some impact. Next, constitutional amendments and laws were considered that would transform Kazakhstan from a parliamentary to a presidential republic. The gradual steps of the first president upset the balance of power in parliament and strengthened presidential power.

1.1 Legacy of the Soviet Union.

Ezrow and Frantz in their works explain the definition of totalitarianism and refer to Harrington's definition. Totalitarianism is a regime ruled by a single party or led by an individual with a powerful secret police and a highly developed ideology. In totalitarian regimes, the government has total control of mass communications and social and economic organizations. Such regimes aim to create an ideal society through the use of government propaganda². About the consequences of the regime, Karl Marx said that men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past; the tradition of all dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brains of the living³. This expression by Karl Marx fully reflects what happened to almost all the republics after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The past experience of dictatorship and political repression will be the "nightmare of the past" for Kazakhstan and other Post-soviet countries. Presidents of the Post-soviet area, except for Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Ukraine, and Baltic countries, have ruled their countries for decades. Nursultan Nazarbayev was the President of Kazakhstan for

² Ezrow, N. and Frantz, E. (2011) Dictators and Dictatorships. Chapter 1. Authoritarian Politics: Typologies. 1st edn. Bloomsbury Publishing. Available at: <https://www.perlego.com/book/838363/dictators-and-dictatorships-pdf> (Accessed: 16 May 2022).

³ See The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte, chapter I. Karl Marx 1852.

almost 30 years. Even after his voluntary resignation in 2019, the first President still has the main influence in the country. Nursultan Nazarbayev began his career as the second secretary of the Karaganda Regional Committee of the Communist Party in early 1970. At that time, during the period of Nazarbayev's childhood and the beginning of his political career, Soviet propaganda presented the leaders as some kind of "saviors" who would lead people to justice, salvation and freedom. Given Nazarbayev's experience in the past, that is, before the presidency, it is not surprising why he made political decisions that created a cult of personality in Kazakhstan.

1.1.1 Personality cult.

Soviet propaganda has been actively forming a cult of personality since the Leninist period in order to form a clear and strong hierarchy of power. Lenin was awarded as *vozhd'*, which means a leader in Russian. The personality cult was used by other Soviet leaders and reached the top in Stalin's period, which was characterized by the worship of the leader⁴. The cult of Stalin was introduced as a protector, and people were referring to him as the last and highest instance. In everyday news publications, he had a certain holy image "Stalin is life on earth. Stalin is a bright joy"⁵. Day after day, propaganda formed the image of a leader who never makes political mistakes and moves the country in the right direction of development. Obviously, the Soviet citizens who received information only through Soviet newspapers and radio had no alternative thinking. In short, the political view about the state was formed by the government. The official ideology had at its disposal a sufficient arsenal, for example, mass media, propaganda, and visual agitation. All public organizations worked for ideology. In its institutes and analytical centers worked the best social scientists and political scientists who created ideological programs and other documents aimed at maintaining the vital activity of the system. The party, starting from the grassroots, party committees and up to the top of the pyramid – The Central Committee of the CPSU, was called to maintain the existing ideological order, and strictly suppress any attempts to violate the constant. Especially, taking

⁴ PISCH, A. (2016). The personality cult of Stalin in Soviet posters, 1929–1953: Archetypes, inventions and fabrications. ANU Press. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1q1crzp>

⁵ Astashkin, D. YU. (2012). Obraz I. V. Stalina v poslevoennoj sovetskoj propogande 1945-1956 gg. (na primere Novgorodskoj oblasti) [The image of I. V. Stalin in the post-war Soviet propaganda of 1945-1956. (on the example of the Novgorod region)]. Bulletin of the Novgorod State University named after Yaroslav the Wise, (69), 6-9. [In Russian]

into account the victory in the Second World War Stalin's totalitarian regime allowed itself anything⁶.

After Stalin's death, the period of the Khrushchev thaw began, which is characterized by criticism of the repressions and the cult of Stalin's personality. Political prisoners were released and censorship was relaxed. Totalitarianism was replaced by a soft dictatorship. The criticism of the "cult" began because Stalin forgot about collectivism, the collective beginning and collective decisions; he stopped paying attention to the opinions of other leading members of the party collective. Nevertheless, Khrushchev said that Stalin committed crimes against thousands of party members, but he did not admit that Stalin was a criminal⁷. After Khrushchev's death, the dictatorship was continued by other secretaries of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union but did not achieve the cult of personality level which was during the Stalin period. Nevertheless, each of the secretaries clearly established totalitarian power and did not tolerate criticism. But gradually an ideological crisis began in the Soviet Union. Even with strong and absolute power, it is difficult to restrain dissenters, because the repression in the country gave a different result, they created internal problems and disagreement.

1.1.2 Repressions and Russification.

The heterogeneity of thinking appeared in the Soviet Union starting in the 1960s, when "dissidents", as the Soviet government called them, started to express their discontent in the country. According to the summary statistics available in the Department of Registration and Archival Funds of the former KGB of the USSR, for the entire Soviet period (1918-1990), 3853900 people were convicted on charges of state crimes and some other articles of criminal legislation of a similar nature, of which 827995 were sentenced to death. Over the past 70 years of the Soviet period, there have been a total of 146 thousand of death sentences for political reasons⁸.

⁶ Nikonova, S. I. (2008). Krizis ideologii i sovetskoe obshchestvo v 1970-80-e gg. [The crisis of ideology and Soviet society in the 1970s and 80s.] Bulletin of the Tambov University. Series: Humanities, (7), 374-382. [In Russian]

⁷ Yurganov Andrey Lvovich (2021). «OTTEPEL'» V SSSR: DVE MODELI REFLEKSII POSLE XX S"EZDA KPSS ["THAW" IN the USSR: TWO MODELS OF REFLECTION AFTER THE XX CONGRESS OF THE CPSU]. Philosophical Journal, 14(3), 131-147. [In Russian]

⁸ Zemskov, V. N. (2012). Masshtaby politicheskikh repressij v SSSR (protiv spekulativnyh i mifologicheskikh postroenij) [The scale of political repression in the USSR (against speculative and mythological constructions).] Proceedings of the Samara Scientific Center of the Russian Academy of Sciences, 14 (3-1), 79-88. [In Russian]

The authorities dealt harshly with dissidents, calling them traitors to their homeland. For example, Brezhnev said in his official speeches: our people demand that such, so to speak, leaders be treated as opponents of socialism, people going against their homeland, accomplices and even agents of imperialism⁹. This attitude towards dissidents and political repression created fear among the citizens of the USSR. People were afraid to express their opinions even among themselves, not to mention independent media or mass protests. The safest way to exist was to follow the installation of the Soviet Union and not doubt the correctness of the decisions of the Communist Party. It was established that starting from school children become Little Octobrists, young pioneers then members of the Komsomol. Later they went to universities and got jobs where they were appointed by the local government. In this regard, the Soviet citizen, as part of the system, believed in the stability of the Soviet Union, which was reflected in practice. Working in the Communist Party primarily meant stability and career growth. This way relation between government and society, which has become entrenched in the USSR, will greatly affect the development of the countries of the former republics in the future. The fear of expressing independent opinions and the lack of democratic institutions will allow future leaders of already independent countries to establish an authoritarian regime, but not as tough as in Soviet times. After the collapse of the Union, there are still citizens who were born and raised in such political conditions.

In addition to this Soviet factor, each republic had its own problems within society regarding political independence. In the case of Kazakhstan, including the Soviet factor, there was an additional problem of discrimination. The Russians, as the majority in the Union and as the heirs of the Russian Empire, had privileges in all the countries of Central Asia. As a result of the colonial policy of the Russian Empire, and then the Soviet Union, the number of ethnic Kazakhs on their territory began to decline. This is confirmed by official statistics in the Republic of Kazakhstan where Kazakhs made up only 39 percent of the total population¹⁰. According to the Soviet programs for the development of Kazakhstan, the number of Russians and other ethnic groups began to increase. The establishment of Soviet power on the territory of present-day Kazakhstan was accompanied by the assimilation of the Kazakh nation with the use of hard and soft power. The Bolsheviks of that time used hard force against people

⁹ Barashkov, G. M. (2007). Dissidentskoe dvizhenie v SSSR (1960-1970-e gody) [Dissident movement in the USSR (1960-1970s)]. News of Saratov University. A new series. Economics series. Management. Law, 7 (1), 102-104. [In Russian]

¹⁰ See the table 1.

who considered Kazakhstan an independent country. As a result, all representatives of the Alash Autonomous Region who opposed the Bolsheviks were convicted.

The soft power policy was used in the promotion of the Russian language and culture. For a successful career in the civil service and in other areas, it was necessary to be fluent in Russian. In schools, from the history of the USSR to the teachings of Marx and Lenin, it was taught in Russian. Consequently, the Kazakhs found themselves in an equally disadvantageous position in their ethnic homeland, which lost the opportunity to freely and widely use their native language, study the history of their ancestors, and pass on to children a rich, deeply meaningful national culture¹¹.

1.2 Experience of the former Soviet republics.

In the early 1990s, all fifteen former Soviet republics began their path of state formation. Some politicians who played leading roles during the Soviet period, such as Islam Karimov of Uzbekistan, Saparmurat Nyazov of Turkmenistan, Boris Yeltsin of Russia, Leonid Kravchuk of Ukraine, and others, have held power since independence. Meanwhile, some of them managed to establish full power in their country, and some, for one reason or another, were forced to leave their posts. Linz and Stepan wrote about the *preconditions* of the consolidated democracy, besides the political system, constitutions and elections¹². The first one is a free and lively civil society where social movements or civic organizations can advance their interests. The second is a political society with free and competitive procedures such as elections, political parties, electoral rules, legislatures, etc. to exercise a legitimate right of control. The third one is rule of law that guarantees the freedoms and independent associational life as well as judicial independence. Fourth, state bureaucracy or state apparatus for the effective capacity to command, regulate, and extract. The last one is an institutionalized economic society for the independence and liveliness of civil society so that it can make its contribution to democracy. All these preconditions are closely related to each other, and the democratic development of society depends on their functionality. In some of them, in particular, in those countries where authoritarian power was established, almost all the conditions were not met. Starting from a political society where, instead of fair and

¹¹ Baltabayeva, A.M. (2010). Voprosy nacional'noj kul'turnoj politiki v Kazahstane v 1940-1980-e gody. [Issues of national cultural policy in Kazakhstan in the 1940s-1980s.] News of higher educational institutions. Sociology. Economy. Politics, (1), 25-28. [In Russian]

¹² Linz, Juan J., and Alfred C. Stepan. 1996. Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.

competitive elections, there was a so-called imitation of popular elections. Naturally, under such conditions, civil society was not able to express its independent position. Freedoms were also not guaranteed to citizens, and because of total control, the judicial system lost independence. The state apparatus, as a result of the usurpation of power, often lost control and moved away from the real problems of the people. All this has led to economic regression and the division of the population into poor and rich, and the middle class as a whole began to live poorer.

Also, authors Ricardo Blaug and John Schwarzmantel pointed out that *citizenship, community, and location* are new challenges that are developing in democratic theory in its modern manifestations¹³. Shortly, citizenship means development within the large-scale representative structures of the nation-state and its participation in political events. Community implies democratic cohesion while location answers the question of where democracy could be fully achieved. The authors imply future so-called new challenges, but the above-mentioned identifications explain the difference in democratic development in the post-Soviet space. That is, depending on these challenges and how society will cope with them after independence, the countries have gone through different democratic development.

1.2.1 Rose Revolution of Georgia.

Georgia was the first country, not including Baltic Countries, to take important steps toward democratic development. In the first decade of independence, nationalist movements were prominent in the country because of the situation in Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Adjara. By 1996, there was a certain feeling of optimism in Georgia, the like of which had not been experienced in the previous five years. True, the economy was in ruins, electricity and water supplies were highly unreliable, and internally displaced persons from South Ossetia and Abkhazia had been forced to take shelter in hotels and other public buildings in Tbilisi and other major cities¹⁴. These circumstances led the country to the Rose Revolution in 2003 when the opposition led by Saakashvili took the power. The new government that came to power after the ‘Rose Revolution’ promised to wage war on corruption, build democratic institutions and orient the country towards eventual membership of NATO and the EU. After

¹³ Ricardo Blaug and John Schwarzmantel Democracy. 2nd edn. Edinburgh University Press. Available at: <https://www.perlego.com/book/1708777/democracy-pdf> (Accessed: 24 May 2022).

¹⁴ Wheatley, J. (2017) Georgia from National Awakening to Rose Revolution. 1st edn. Taylor and Francis. Available at: <https://www.perlego.com/book/1487426/georgia-from-national-awakening-to-rose-revolution-pdf> (Accessed: 21 May 2022).

the Rose Revolution, many senior police officers were sacked for corruption, incompetence and drug-taking¹⁵. The post-revolutionary period in Georgia can be assessed differently in connection with the situation of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, political prisoners, as well as from the point of international relations. But as a result of the change of power in the country, noticeable changes have taken place and have not led the country to stagnation in terms of development. In 2012, the World Bank provided a report in which they positively assess the reforms in Georgia that enabled the prompt implementation of a strategy characterized by mutually reinforcing reforms for corruption prevention, detection, and enforcement in a wide range of public services¹⁶. The change is particularly striking if we compare it with other post-Soviet countries where one can still feel the Soviet past. The reforms are still ongoing and Georgia gets lots of praise over the past several years for its progress in many fields, including liberalization of the economy and fighting against organized crime and corruption¹⁷. One of the important factors of such events was the location of Georgia. The European Union's policy towards the Baltic States and the former Warsaw Pact countries has become an influential factor. For instance, Latvia has made undeniable progress in consolidating democracy since the restoration of independence in 1991, moving successfully toward integration into both the EU and NATO at an unexpectedly fast pace. Since 1997 the EU has repeatedly noted that Latvia has fulfilled the political criteria for membership. A fundamental reason for successful democratization has been the high domestic motivation to conform to democratic standards and the wish to regain what is seen as Latvia's rightful place among Western democracies¹⁸.

1.2.2 Orange revolution and Maidan.

Another example of the democratization and closer approach to the EU is the Orange Revolution in Ukraine. The second president Leonid Kuchma pursued a multi-vector policy while maintaining a balance between the West and Post-Soviet countries. In May 1997 Boris Yeltsin and Leonid Kuchma concluded The Treaty on Friendship, Cooperation, and Partnership between Ukraine and the Russian Federation that provided for further cooperation

¹⁵ Wheatley, J. 2017. Georgia from National Awakening to Rose Revolution.

¹⁶ Fighting corruption in public services : chronicling Georgia's reforms (English). Directions in development : public sector governance Washington, D.C. : World Bank Group. <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/518301468256183463/Fighting-corruption-in-public-services-chronicling-Georgias-reforms>

¹⁷ Kupatadze, A. (2012). Explaining Georgia's anti-corruption drive. *European Security*, 21, 16 - 36.

¹⁸ Kubicek, P. (2004) *The European Union & Democratization*. 1st edn. Taylor and Francis. Available at: <https://www.perlego.com/book/1613853/the-european-union-democratization-pdf> (Accessed: 24 May 2022).

and support. In July of the same year, Kuchma signed the Charter on a Distinctive Partnership between the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and Ukraine. The issue of European integration was also on the agenda. In 1994, when Ukraine voluntarily renounced nuclear weapons, the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement was signed. Thus, Kuchma tried to maintain a balance between Europe and Russia, gradually democratizing society and bringing the process of European integration closer. However, maintaining a balance between the two sides was a very difficult issue for Ukraine due to the population and location of the country. In the 2004 presidential elections in Ukraine, two strong candidates had slightly different ideas about the country's foreign policy and development. On the one hand, Viktor Yushchenko is supported by Eastern countries and the United States, on the other, Viktor Yanukovich is supported by the Russian Federation. Subsequently, the results of these elections caused the Orange Revolution, in which the opposition won. Åslund and McFaul comprised four processes of the Orange Revolution in Ukraine. The first and most significant one is the popular protests that occurred throughout major Ukrainian cities. It includes thousands of protesters, revolutionary speeches of the opposition leaders, blockade of the governmental buildings, as well as the persistence of Ukrainian protesters. The second process was the negotiation process between the government and opposition mediated by Polish President Alexander Kwasniewski, Lithuanian President Valdas Adamkus, EU's High Representative Javier Solana, and Russian State Duma Speaker Boris Gryzlov. The third process occurred in Parliament and Supreme Court. The Rada, Ukrainian Parliament, refused to ratify the official results released by Central Election Committee. Supreme Court annulled these results of the second round and announced a rerun in December. The last process described by authors regarding the amendments to the Constitution agreed upon by both sides¹⁹. Because then, in the early 2000s, in some regions of Ukraine, in particular in the east and south of Ukraine, there were still pro-Russian sentiments. But the Orange Revolution in 2004-2005 and the Euromaidan in 2013-2014 showed the attitude and demand of the majority regarding European Integration. By achieving a change of government in 2014, Ukrainians paid a very high price due to Russian aggression. This eventually led to a full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine. However, having a legitimate government with democratic values, Ukraine received the support of Western countries. In the case of Ukraine, at least two

¹⁹ Åslund, A., & McFaul, M. Anthony. (2006). *Revolution in orange : the origins of Ukraine's democratic breakthrough*. Introduction. Perspectives on the Orange Revolution. Washington (D.C.): Carnegie endowment for international peace. Available at: <https://www.perlego.com/book/742427/revolution-in-orange-pdf> (Accessed: 5 July 2022).

preconditions of consolidated democracy mentioned by authors such as political civil society and rule of law were implemented.

1.3 Constitutional amendments. The Super-Presidential Republic.

While Georgia and other former republics were going through civil wars and revolutions, the first prerequisites for an authoritarian regime appeared in Kazakhstan. Erzow and Frantz defined that in some cases a dictatorship arises after the seizure of power, in which the co-conspirators are not tightly organized, enabling the leader to maximize power. Personalist dictatorships can also take shape in other scenarios, however, such as when democratically-elected leaders implement constitutional changes enabling them to stay in power indefinitely. Such changes are possible, primarily because the leader does not face a tightly organized group that is capable of resisting him²⁰.

However, in the case of Nazarbayev, in addition to the opposition forces, other factors allowed him to retain power since the early 1990s. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Nursultan Nazarbayev as the Chairman of the Communist Party of Kazakhstan had a great opportunity to hold the power. The issue of independence was very sensitive for the Kazakh population at that time; the appointment of ethnic Russian Gennady Kolbin to the position of the Chairman of the Kazakh Communist Party in 1986 was a reason for the mass protests in Kazakh Soviet Socialistic Republic. This was the first outright expression of discontent in the USSR where it was not acceptable, and obviously, the protests were suppressed by force with the use of weapons including mass killings. The struggle for independence was aimed at consolidating the representatives of the titular ethnic group²¹.

Taking these into account, in the early 90s the most important issue was independence and the appointment of a Kazakh politician with the aim to become an independent state. The period of the early 1990s is often called “*bardak*”, which means mess or chaos in Russian, which precisely describes the situation in Soviet society. The formation of a violent network was primarily a corollary of the appropriation of state property during the period when the Soviet state was disintegrating. The disintegration of the coercive and legal apparatus of the

²⁰ Ezrow, N. and Frantz, E. (2011) Dictators and Dictatorships. Chapter 2. Causes of Dictatorship. 1st edn. Bloomsbury Publishing. Available at: <https://www.perlego.com/book/838363/dictators-and-dictatorships-pdf> (Accessed: 16 May 2022).

²¹ Ryzhichkin N.N. (2020). Postsovetskij Kazahstan. Puti formirovaniya nacional'noj identichnosti. [Post-Soviet Kazakhstan. Ways of formation of national identity.] Free thought, (3 (1681)), 175-186. [In Russian]

state resulted in a general surge of violence and the mushrooming of networks of criminals and violent individuals²². All this led to a very high crime rate and there were no major needs in the country. Day after day people just survived in such conditions and just hoped that the situation would change for the better. In such circumstances, the majority of Kazakh people was not involved in political events in the country which allowed the Government to adopt the constitutional changes and several constitutional laws. After the first legitimate elections, step by step the process of the consolidation of power was started. The adoption of the new constitution in 1995 and the dissolution of the Supreme Council in 1993 were the first steps in establishing a super-presidential regime. The old Constitution of Kazakhstan from 1993 was more democratic and limited presidential power²³.

According to that Constitution, Only the Supreme Council was allowed to adopt the Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan and make amendments as well as adopt laws and monitor their implementation. It also had major responsibilities such as interpreting the laws on which disputes arose and changing the territorial borders of the country. Besides, it was responsible for the monetary system, budget, tax policy, and made decisions on government loans. But the most important was the appointment of the President, Prime Minister, and other ministers. The Supreme Council was the predecessor of the parliament and was the highest legislative body, appointed by popular elections, and consisted of 360 deputies for a term of five years. At that time, a parliamentary government existed in Kazakhstan, which directly limited the powers of the president. It is clear that Nazarbayev did not like this restriction of rights, so he initiated the creation of a working group that developed a new Constitution for the Republic of Kazakhstan. The new Constitution was submitted to a referendum, which took place from July 28 to August 30, 1995. Only a month was allotted for the discussion of the new Constitution, and citizens could not fully understand the consequences of their decisions. The political literacy of the population was low due to social problems, and the new constitution was promoted as a solution to these problems. According to the Constitution of 1995, a presidential form of government was established in Kazakhstan²⁴. Many influential powers were transferred to the President. The Supreme Council was abolished, and a bicameral parliament was adopted instead. At that time, many deputies of the Supreme

²² Nazpary, J. (2001) Post-Soviet Chaos. 1st edn. Pluto Press. Available at: <https://www.perlego.com/book/664665/postsoviet-chaos-pdf> (Accessed: 17 May 2022).

²³ See the Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan adopted by The Supreme Council of the Republic of Kazakhstan of January 28, 1993. Available at: <https://adilet.zan.kz/rus/docs/K930001000>

²⁴ Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated August 30, 1995. Available at Official website of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan: https://www.akorda.kz/en/official_documents/constitution

Council believed President Nazarbayev and did not interfere with new ideas. A few years later, the then chairman of the Supreme Council Serikbolsyn Abdildin in his interview admits that “the whole people bet on him and I believed that he would be a good leader of Kazakhstan, but unfortunately my hopes collapsed from the first years of independence”²⁵.

Another step taken by President Nazarbayev was the relocation of the capital from Almaty to Akmola. According to Edward Schatz, elites affect the changes piecemeal, using a range of strategies from the uninhibited use of force to eliminate opposing power bases, compelling compliance, and rewarding *loyalty* to more humane forms of persuasion such as politicking and institution building to create incentives to accept the new political system²⁶. Nursultan Nazarbayev needed a new surface to build a new political system loyal to him. After the abolition of the former members of the Supreme Council, they mostly remained in Almaty. In addition, there were many influential people, poets, singers, writers, etc. Considering the events of December 1996, there has always been a protest movement in Almaty. But besides this, there were other reasonable grounds for moving the capital. The south and southeast of Kazakhstan were densely populated. There were only a few small towns in the central part of Kazakhstan due to weather conditions and transport. Therefore, it was necessary to develop this part of Kazakhstan. One of the main reasons was that the northern and central part of Kazakhstan was predominantly populated by ethnic Russians and representatives of other nationalities. At that time, Kazakhstan was already aware of the current situation in Transnistria, Abkhazia and Ossetia. In addition to the goal of maintaining power, there were other national reasons for the transfer of the capital. President Nazarbayev’s imposition of sharp limits on democratic parliamentary politics and free speech, though deplored in the West, have arguably helped to contain incipient conflict between local Russians and Kazakhs, which could have triggered a larger conflict involving Russia itself²⁷. Considering this, it can be assumed that at that time these measures were necessary to preserve the constitutional order of the state.

The adoption of a new constitution and the transfer of the capital were aimed at strengthening the power of the president in a broad sense. But other legislative changes were

²⁵ See the Online Conference with Serikbolsyn Abdildin on Azattyq TV. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QMVtyCkiJAY>

²⁶ See the article by Edward Schatz WHEN CAPITAL CITIES MOVE: THE POLITICAL GEOGRAPHY OF NATION AND STATE BUILDING Available at: https://kellogg.nd.edu/sites/default/files/old_files/documents/303.pdf

²⁷ Rubin, B., & Snyder, J. (Eds.). (1998). Post-Soviet Political Order (1st ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203067338>

aimed precisely at strengthening Nazarbayev as a politician. In 1998, the country's constitution was amended. Several changes have been made, but the chief of these is the President of Section III. In 1998, Nazarbayev turned 58, which prevented him from running for the next presidential election. Therefore, the text “The age of a civil servant should not exceed sixty years, and in exceptional cases - sixty-five years” was excluded from Article 33. The term of office of the President in accordance with Article 44 has been increased from 5 to 7 years. Also, according to Article 44, in the event of early dismissal or removal from office of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, as well as his death, the powers of the President of the Republic for the remaining term are transferred to the Chairman of the Senate of the Parliament. In July 2000, the constitutional law "On the First President of the Republic of Kazakhstan" was adopted, which determined the status of the first president. According to the hierarchy of legal acts, constitutional law is after the constitution and above the codes and other laws that define certain social relations. Then, for the first time, legislatures began to distinguish the first president from subsequent possible future presidents. In addition to the presidency, the concept was introduced that the first president should have a special status and immunity. In addition to immunity, the constitutional law addresses issues of housing, security and safety, communications and transport, which were provided at the expense of the republican budget²⁸. Constitutional changes and new laws strengthened Nazarbaev's power, but they ignited opposition in the country. Some politicians were unhappy with this usurpation of power, and some went into opposition after a conflict with the president.

One of the questions in the thesis questionnaire was related to Nazarbayev's personality cult. Respondents were asked about the existence of a personality cult in Kazakhstan. Only 8.1% (10 responses) believe that there is no cult of personality and never has been. 57.3% (71 responses) believe that there is a cult of personality in the country, and the renaming of the capital and streets is a confirmation of this. 36.3% (45 responses) assume that the cult of personality existed in Kazakhstan and is gradually declining. The remaining 3.2% (4 responses) answered with their own individual answers, such as that the cult of Nazarbayev's personality exists and that it is in the past²⁹. The results of the survey show that even after the resignation of the first president, the majority of the population retains signs of a personality cult. However, it is decreasing day by day.

²⁸ See the Constitutional Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan “About the First President of the Republic of Kazakhstan” from July 20, 2000 N 83-II, archive edition.

²⁹ See the survey results, question 3.

Concluding remarks.

The Soviet period of rule in Kazakhstan left several problems in the field of governance that have become problematic in the new history of the country. The totalitarian regime and the persecution of dissidents as the Soviet experience of governance influenced the politics of Kazakhstan. Because from the first years of independence, the country was ruled by those who were part of the communist system of the USSR. Some countries, such as Georgia and Ukraine, at least managed to avoid authoritarian regimes because the preconditions for establishing democracy were partially met. However, in many other post-Soviet countries, including Kazakhstan, an authoritarian regime has been established. Considering the political and social situation in the post-Soviet countries, when the collapse of the USSR gave rise to complete chaos, the establishment of authoritarian regimes in some countries was quite expected. At that time, for many countries, the main task was to gain independence and preserve their territorial integrity by preventing military conflicts. The policy of the first President Nursultan Nazarbayev contributed to the establishment of an authoritarian regime in Kazakhstan. The first signs of authoritarian power appeared in 1995 after the adoption of a new constitution. After the transfer of the capital, many influential politicians remained in Almaty, which allowed Nazarbayev to establish his team in the new capital. Since 2000, he began to establish special privileges for himself and his family members. His entourage and members of his family held high positions, which strengthened his control over the country.

Chapter 2. Democratic development of Kazakhstan.

The second chapter describes the democratic development of the country after independence. Since the mid-1990s, several steps have been taken to strengthen presidential power. In addition, several industries in the country began to be controlled by people close to President Nazarbayev and members of his family. In this regard, opposition activity began to intensify in the country. Former politicians have formed several parties and social movements. All attempts to change the current government were suppressed, and the leaders of these ideas were imprisoned for various politically motivated cases. However, even after internal disagreements and pressure from the authorities, there is still opposition in Kazakhstan. All this political confrontation has affected freedom of speech and the independence of the judiciary. The victims of persecution were journalists who collaborated with the opposition or had at least some connection with it. Many independent journalists were forced to leave the country or lived under the threat of persecution. The method of “telephone justice”, known since Soviet times, began to flourish in the judicial system. Interference with the independence of the judiciary has led to high levels of corruption and citizens' distrust of the judiciary.

2.1 The opposition since 2000.

The Kazakh opposition began to form in the early 1990s, at the first stages of the development of pluralism. With the beginning of economic transformations, parties that disagree with the old systemic values entered the political arena. These include the Social Democratic Party of Sergei Duvanov, the national freedom Party "Alash" of Aron Atabek Workers' Movement of Kazakhstan “Solidarity” and others³⁰. But at that time there were no influential leaders with significant political experience in the opposition. Since the 2000s, opposition movements have begun to consolidate around previous members of the Government. A logical question is brewing: why did young members of society unite against President Nazarbayev? Here, Rico Isaacs, a scholar at Oxford Brookes University, explains Nazarbayev's formal and informal influence in key positions in order to impose institutional restrictions on parties. Firstly, Nazarbaev, using his position, was able to create a dominant presidential party, as well as create virtual and satellite parties, the so-called co-optation of the opposition. Secondly, Nazarbayev, as president, was responsible for the institutional

³⁰ Karmazina, L. (2009). Problemy kazahstanskoj oppozicii. [Problems of the Kazakh opposition.] Central Asia and the Caucasus, (4-5 (6465)), 199-209. [In Russian]

constraints affecting party participation in the election campaign. Election rules were created to increase the chances of pro-presidential candidates winning, of course, with the expected loyalty of pro-presidential civil servants. On the one hand, it seemed that the government wanted to create pluralism by giving equality, but the informal interpretation of rules ensured that the president's preferences would be implemented. Third, the law on political parties and its selective application to presidential and non-presidential parties contributed to the consolidation of power³¹.

The split of the Nazarbayev clan, or rather the dominance of his clan, further accelerated the process of resistance to the regime. Political scientist, Vitaly Khlyupin, who studies the geopolitical situation of the Republic of Kazakhstan, described this phenomenon as a “Big family of Nursultan Nazarbayev” (Bol’shaya Sem’ya Nursultana Nazarbayeva)³². The formation of the Nazarbayev "family", as described by Khlyupin, began to take shape in the mid-1990s, but became pronounced in the 2000s. Appointments of certain governmental and public positions during 1995-2002 in Kazakhstan show us it. Close relatives of President Nazarbayev were appointed to leading and influential positions. Control of mass media was implemented through the national agency Khabar. So, in 1995, the eldest daughter of Nursultan Nazarbayev, Dariga Nazarbayeva, became the director of the National Television News Agency "Khabar". Her husband, Rahat Aliyev, the son-in-law of Nursultan Nazarbayev, has been the general Director of the KazMedImport, the foreign trade company under the Ministry of Foreign Economic Relations of the Republic of Kazakhstan. In 1998, he was appointed a Chairman of the Tax Police Committee, First vice Minister of State Revenue of Kazakhstan. In 1997, another son-in-law of Nazarbayev, the husband of the middle daughter Dinara, Timur Kulibayev, was appointed Vice president for Economics and Finance at Kazakhoil (Kazakh National Oil Company). Later, when Kulibayev was appointed to the post of president of the National Oil Transportation Company KazTransOil (a state-owned company that manages a network of trunk oil pipelines), Nazarbayev's nephew, Kairat Satybaldy, took his place in Kazakhoil. There were other appointments that did not concern family members, but the above are the main ones that caused misunderstanding among some

³¹ Isaacs, R. (2011) *Party System Formation in Kazakhstan*. 1st edn. Taylor and Francis. Available at: <https://www.perlego.com/book/1686489/party-system-formation-in-kazakhstan-pdf> (Accessed: 14 August 2022).

³² Khlyupin V. «Bol'shaya sem'ya» Nursultana Nazarbaeva. *Politicheskaya elita sovremennogo Kazahstana*. ["Big family" of Nursultan Nazarbayev. The political elite of modern Kazakhstan.] Moscow: Institute of Topical Political Studies, 1998. [In Russian]

politicians of that time. Then many were against it, but all opposed it openly. Not without the help of the president, they achieved good results in their positions and often changed them.

Some politicians did not like the usurpation of power, so they gradually began to criticize or oppose President Nazarbayev. As a result of the political crisis in the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Supreme Council was dissolved, and the powers of the President were extended. Even then, in 1995, the former chairman of the Supreme Council, *Serikbolsin Abdildin*, went into opposition. In 1999, he put forward his candidacy for the presidential election and took second place. Later, he accused the Central Election Commission of election fraud. The second opposition leader was *Akezhan Kazhegeldin*, who was Prime Minister from 1994-1997. Like Abdildin, he put forward his candidacy for the presidential election in 1999. However, an administrative offense was fabricated against him, as a result of which the election commission refused to register him as a candidate. Later, a criminal case was fabricated against him, and he emigrated abroad. A few years later, the European Parliament recognized him as a political refugee and issued him a Freedom Passport. The most prominent person in the opposition is *Mukhtar Ablyazov*, who was the Minister of Energy, Industry and Trade and head of BTA Bank. He resigned in 1999, noting that the methods of administration of the Nazarbayev regime made it impossible to carry out systemic reforms. A few years later, Ablyazov was sentenced to 6 years in prison in a penal colony. In 2003, he was pardoned in exchange for a promise not to engage in politics. He emigrated to France and received political refugee status there. A court in Kazakhstan sentenced him in absentia to life imprisonment for orchestrating the murder. Former akim of Pavlodar region *Galymzhan Zhakiyanov* also spoke out against Nazarbayev's rule by creating a public association "Democratic Choice of Kazakhstan". In August 2002, he was sentenced to 7 years in prison for abuse of office. Released at the beginning of 2006. After that, he moved with his family to the USA. The aforementioned politicians had already been dismissed from their posts at the time of their nomination by the opposition. Next, we will look at exactly what steps they have taken to change the situation in Kazakhstan.

2.1.1 Democratic Choice of Kazakhstan.

At the beginning of 2000, Ablyazov and Zhakiyanov decided to create a movement that would advocate reforms and seek to change the regime by democratic and legal methods. On their initiative, the public association "Democratic Choice of Kazakhstan" (DCK, a prohibited

organization in Kazakhstan) was created. Initially, the movement did not directly oppose the government. Supporters of the movement wanted to establish a dialogue with the authorities and strengthen democracy in the republic, and not overthrow the government or the president. The early initiators of the movement point out that the original goal was this: a government that will ultimately meet the demands of society, a government that will continue to run the country, but under the control of citizens³³. A group of Kazakh state and public figures, and businessmen announced the creation of an opposition movement in 2001. The founders, in addition to Ablyazov and Zhakiyanov, were Deputy Prime Minister Uraz Dzhandosov; Vice Minister of Defense Zhannat Yertlesova; Minister of Labor and Social Protection Alikhan Baimenov; Vice Minister of Finance Kairat Kelimbetov; Chairman of the Board of Kazkommertsbank Nurzhan Subkhanberdin; deputies Tolen Tokhtasynov, Serik Konakbaev and Bulat Abilov; People's Artist of Kazakhstan Asanali Ashimov; Chairman of the Agency for Regulation of Natural Monopolies, Protection of Competition and Support of Small Business Berik Imashev.

Such an association of independent, influential, and experienced specialists in one wing openly threatened the government. In this regard, Nazarbayev made a clear statement that showed how he relates to opposition movements. His statement was sent through Prime Minister Tokayev. In November 2001, Tokayev addressed members of the DCK. "I appeal to the Head of State with an urgent request to remove from their positions non-professionals and schemers working in his environment. It's time to serve the country, not third-party masters... It's time to get down to business, not politicking. Some of our citizens, representing the business elite, and even civil servants who have grown rich over ten years of independence, have decided to declare an information war on their own state, insulting and blackmailing the government and parliament," he concluded³⁴. Tokayev also criticized the activities of all participants in the democratic movement individually, referring to their selfish goals. Meanwhile, in January 2002, the DCK was about to hold a mass rally in Almaty. Delegates from all over Kazakhstan arrived at the Constituent Assembly of the DCK. Among them were Communists, members of the Republican People's Party of Kazakhstan - Kazhegeldin's party, activists of the Generation movement, and many others. That is, representatives of all political associations, more or less dissatisfied with the regime of personal power of President

³³ Mukhtar Ablyazov. HISTORY OF DVK. BEGINNING. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v-xKA-pHCbE&t=146s>

³⁴ Kazakh National Television. The statement of the Prime Minister Tokayev from 20 November 2001. Full text available at: <https://zonakz.net/2001/11/21/zayavlenie-premer-ministra-kazaxsta/>

Nursultan Nazarbayev, came to the meeting in Almaty³⁵. The day before, they had a meeting in the south of Kazakhstan, in Shymkent. At all meetings, DCK leaders criticized the presidential form of government, including the clan system that appeared in Kazakhstan in the late 1990s. They also demanded the democratization of society, starting with the appointment of local akims through voting in the regions. Since at that time almost all members of the DCK were removed from their posts, there was some criticism of the then authorities. The leaders also expressed their desire to participate in the upcoming parliamentary elections. According to various sources, the number of supporters at that time in the city of Almaty alone ranged from 1,000 to 5,000 people. This phenomenon has never happened before. This event was broadcast on such channels as “TAN” and “IRBIS”³⁶. The channels were disbanded in the same year under various pretexts. After this meeting, the state began a kind of "hunt" of the representatives of the DCK for all participants in the movement.

A British journalist based in Almaty, Joanna Lillis, author of articles in *The Economist*, *Guardian*, *Independent*, *Foreign Policy*, and *POLITICO*, has written a book about the politics of Kazakhstan. Her chapter describing these events is called "Don't Mess with the Boss", which accurately describes the political situation of that time. The chapter of the book contains Ablyazov's words about those times. “Two months after the creation of DCK, Nazarbayev ‘warned me that if I didn’t renounce my convictions and renounce Democratic Choice of Kazakhstan ... I’d be jailed and my business taken away,’ Ablyazov later recalled. ‘He (Nazarbayev) said, your fate and that of Galymzhan Zhakiyanov will be under my personal control. Now,’ he concluded with a humorless laugh, ‘I see that it was under his personal control’” it says³⁷. The threats were real, because already in March 2002 Ablyazov was detained, and a few months later he was imprisoned for 6 years. The detention of Zhakiyanov was somewhat problematic as it attracted public attention. When the police tried to detain him, he took refuge in the building where the French embassy was located. After several days of negotiations, a memorandum was signed between the ambassadors of France, Great Britain, Germany, and the Kazakh Foreign Ministry, according to which Zhakiyanov was guaranteed an open and transparent trial. Despite the agreements, Zhakiyanov was imprisoned for 7 years, and his condition in prison worsened every day. In this regard, Human Rights Watch made several recommendations, such as taking appropriate disciplinary action

³⁵Kazakh Report: January 18, 2002. Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. <https://www.rferl.org/a/1343343.html>

³⁶ Political Freedoms in Kazakhstan. The report. Human Rights Watch. April 5, 2004. <https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/kazakhstan0404.pdf>

³⁷ Lillis, J. (2018) *Dark Shadows*. 1st ed. Bloomsbury Publishing. Available at: <https://www.perlego.com/book/875572/dark-shadows-pdf> (Accessed: 29 July 2022).

against any and all officials responsible for such actions; taking all measures to ensure that officials do not harass, arbitrarily arrest or detain or take other illegal actions against Zhakiyanov; Ensure that Zhakiyanov receives proper medical care and access to medical personnel and others³⁸. In addition to independent organizations, the European Parliament in February 2003 recognized the case of Ablyazov and Zhakiyanov as politically motivated. Expressing extreme concern, he called on the Kazakh authorities to conduct an independent investigation and make this information publicly available³⁹.

In 2004, Western countries did not realize, at least in the early 2000s, that power in Kazakhstan could become authoritarian. The European Parliament has made rather bold and open statements calling for democratic development, with the hope that they will be implemented. Because Kazakhstan has taken good steps towards international integration, such as renunciation of nuclear weapons, open trade with all Western countries, neutrality in all conflicts, and adherence to the UN agenda in governance. Compared to Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, where the prerequisites for an authoritarian regime were obvious, Kazakhstan positioned itself as a stable and reliable economic partner. The statements of the European Parliament can be regarded in different ways. It can be considered positive that Ablyazov and Zhakiyanov were not killed in prisons, including those released under amnesty. But it is incorrect to say that the EU requirements were met since politically motivated cases against opposition leaders were conducted without a “fair trial”. However, after the arrest of the leaders, the further development of the DCK was stopped. The so-called "message" to other DCK members was properly delivered. Of course, the opposition in Kazakhstan as a whole did not give up but withstood a very strong blow. The DCK subsequently split into two political parties. In January 2005, by the decision of a specialized court in Almaty, a decision was made to forcibly liquidate the DVK party. DCK was accused of endangering national security and inciting extremism. In the same year, members of the DCK announced the creation of the Alga (Forward) party. The party was never registered by the Ministry of Justice, and the Almaty District Court of Almaty recognized the party as extremist in 2012.

³⁸ Human Rights Watch. 2004. Political Freedoms in Kazakhstan.

³⁹ Thursday, 13 February 2003 – Strasbourg. Human rights in Kazakhstan and Central Asia

European Parliament resolution on Kazakhstan https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-5-2003-0064_EN.pdf

2.1.2 Ak Zhol.

In January 2002, due to misunderstandings in the opposition, some members led by Uraz Zhandosov, Alikhan Baimenov, and Bulat Abilov founded another opposition political party called *Ak Zhol* (Bright Path). There are different points of view in the debate about the reasons for the split. The “young opposition” represented by Uraz Dzhandosov, Alikhan Baimenov, and Bulat Abilov was frightened by the radicalism of their colleagues and hurried out of the fire as soon as Nazarbayev’s position became clear, forming a less radical wing of the “democrats”. “, of course, in order to avoid the fate of Ablyazov and Zhakiyanov⁴⁰. On April 3, 2002, the party was registered with the Ministry of Justice of Kazakhstan. In the elections to the Majilis (the lower house of the Parliament of the Republic of Kazakhstan), the party won 12 percent of the vote and, despite this, had only one representative in Parliament. The party was one of the initiators of the creation of the Coordinating Council of three parties - the DCK, the CCP and Ak Zhol - to nominate a single opposition candidate in the upcoming 2006 presidential elections. Since it was more expedient for the opposition to unite and nominate one strong candidate. Despite some internal problems, the opposition put all this aside and jointly achieved positive results in the 2006 presidential election.

Unfortunately, at the beginning of 2005, disagreements arose between the co-chairs of the Ak Zhol party. On March 15, 2005, Alikhan Baimenov and Lyudmila Zhulanova convened the Ak Zhol Congress and abolished the institution of co-chairs. Alikhan Baimenov was elected Chairman, which meant the establishment of sole leadership. Baimenov and Zhulanova rewrote the charter, and it was immediately registered by the authorities. Baimenov took power of the party. Other co-chairs such as Altynbek Sarsenbayuly, Bulat Abilov, and Oraz Dzhandosov considered the congress illegal. They accused Alikhan Baimenov of "betraying the opposition." Then they formed their own party called Naǵyz Ak Zhol (True Bright Path). Most likely, such a split in the party just a year before the presidential election is not accidental. Be that as it may, this was a serious blow to the opposition and caused some confusion among the population. Some experts believe that the split was provoked by the authorities using "black" political technologies - in any case, this interpretation is supported by the absence of significant differences in the program settings of the split factions; others explain this by the personal rivalry between the leaders (co-chairs) of

⁴⁰ Ivanov, V. , & Grozin, A. (2003). Kazakhstan: bor'ba prestolonaslednikov. Rossiya i musul'manskij mir. [Kazakhstan: the struggle of the heirs to the throne. Russia and the Muslim World] p. 72-80. [In Russian]

Akzhol; finally, others believe that the split was inevitable, since Baimenov's party is the "constructive opposition", while the party of Abilov and his comrades is the "radical"⁴¹. In 2022, in an interview, Bulat Abilov said: we had the Ak Zhol party in 2004, which was stolen by Alikhan Baimenov, and now it is led by a bad person, Azat Peruashev. I want to ask him if you really have a conscience, just write a letter of resignation⁴². After the split of the party, Bulat Abilov was prosecuted 4 times on trumped-up charges and was never allowed to participate in parliamentary or presidential elections. In 2006, the country's most notorious case occurred when another co-chair, Altynbek Sarsenbayuly, was killed along with his bodyguards in Almaty.

2.1.3 Current situation.

In the 1990s and early 2000s, there was a parliamentary opposition in Kazakhstan. But since the authorities decided not to cooperate with the opposition, today it has a different look. Describing the modern Russian opposition, Russian authors use the characteristics of the so-called "non-systemic" opposition. This description is fully consistent with the situation in Kazakhstan. According to them, "The 'non-system' opposition is made up of a few political parties that do actually exist but are not recognized by the government and have no right to take part in elections. They have all tried on more than one occasion to register, but have been formally turned down"⁴³. At the same time, the authors note that even if the opposition is outside the system, they have very strong tools of influence, given the current possibilities of social networks. The successor to the DCK, the Alga party, tried to promote the democratic development of Kazakhstan after the liquidation of the DCK. One of the notable actions was in 2012 when the opposition supported the protesters in Zhanaozen. They supplied provisions throughout the event. Unfortunately, this had a negative impact on the party. The party itself was recognized as an extremist organization, and its leader Vladimir Kozlov was sentenced to

⁴¹ Gorst, I. (2006). Politicheskie perspektivy Kazahstana. Rossiya i musul'manskij mir. [Political prospects of Kazakhstan. Russia and the Muslim World] p. 129-142. [In Russian]

⁴² Bulat Abilov: o sozdanii svoej politicheskoy partii. [Bulat Abilov: about the creation of his political party]. Armanzhan Baitasov. BaitasovLive. [In Russian] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EJbmsdHt0VA&t=3084s>

⁴³ See the Russian Authors: Grigorii Golosov. Russian opposition: inside or outside the system? openDemocracy. 1 September 2011. <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/odr/russian-opposition-inside-or-outside-system/>; Eliseeva Natalia. THE "NEW" NON-SYSTEMIC OPPOSITION IN RUSSIA. Saint-Petersburg State University. February 2016. <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/326573778.pdf>; Mansurov Stepan Olegovich (2015). Nesistemnaya oppozitsiya, eyo osobennosti i eyo podderzhka inostrannymi gosudarstvami - paradigma potencial'nogo issledovaniya. [Non-systemic opposition, its features and its support by foreign states is a paradigm of potential research.] Humanities, Socio-Economic and Social Sciences, (2), p. 79-81.

7 and a half years. The uprising of the current opposition is closely linked to the resurgence of the DCK.

There were criminal cases and discontent, but the opposition itself was calm for several years. But in 2017, the former co-founder of the DCK, Mukhtar Ablyazov, announced the creation of a new democratic choice for Kazakhstan. He founded a new old party based on democratic principles. Since that time, the DCK has become the strongest and most popular opposition movement in the country. The party's official agenda has not changed since 2003. There are several important changes proposed by Ablyazov, such as the abolition of the presidency, the creation of a parliamentary republic with a unicameral parliament and direct elections, the protection of human rights, freedom of association, and a ban on land privatization⁴⁴. Obviously, the government did not welcome the spread of these ideas too quickly. The movement became popular among citizens. Mukhtar Ablyazov started to share his past through social media. Basically, he criticized the current government for its mistakes. He claims that the political stagnation in Kazakhstan is because of the irremovability of power and calls to change the Nazarbayev regime (as he refers).

In 2018, by the decision of the Yesil District Court of Astana, the political party "Democratic Choice of Kazakhstan" was officially recognized as an extremist organization. According to the comments of the General Prosecutor's Office, the activities of the DCK are recognized as extremist and prohibited throughout the territory of the Republic of Kazakhstan, including the dissemination of information and materials using the media, telecommunications networks, social networks, instant messengers and video hosting⁴⁵. The DCK ban was supposed to stop traffic. But in practice it was different. By publicly covering the movement itself, that is, by often paying attention to it, the state made it more popular. Of course, people's opinions are divided depending on their political views. Someone began to look at them with apprehension, while someone, on the contrary, took their side, because there was no other opportunity to express their protest. Today, DCK actively promotes its activities through social networks such as Instagram, Facebook, Telegram, and YouTube.

⁴⁴Ablyazov ob'yavil o sozdanii novogo «Demvybora Kazahstana». [Ablyazov announced the creation of a new "Democratic Choice of Kazakhstan"]. Radio Azattyq RFE/RL. April 20, 2017. [In Russian] <https://rus.azattyq.org/a/28441043.html>

⁴⁵Asel Sataeva. DVK priznali ekstremistskoj organizaciej. [DCK was recognized as an extremist organization.] Tengrinews.kz media portal. March 13, 2018. [In Russian] https://tengrinews.kz/kazakhstan_news/dvk-priznali-ekstremistskoj-organizatsiey-339710/

Authorities initially blocked Instagram during Ablyazov's live broadcast⁴⁶. DCK activists were detained on the streets, and administrative protocols were brought against them. One of them is the detention of 80 activists who came to honor the memory of Dulat Agadil, another activist who died in prison⁴⁷.

In addition to the DCK, the unregistered “Köşe” (the street from Kazakh) party and the movement “Oyan Qazaqstan” (wake up Kazakhstan from Kazakh) can be mentioned. Since the DCK has been banned, its supporters are looking for a legal way to protest. But even in this case, the authorities banned the mass demonstrations of the Köşe party. By decision of the Taraz City Court, Zhazira Qambarova was sentenced to two years of “restriction of freedom” after being found guilty of organizing and participating in the activities of the Köşe opposition party, which has ties to another banned party, the DVK⁴⁸. Currently, opposition movements and parties carry out their activities through social networks. Often they organize protests and rallies on the eve of and during major political events, such as the renaming of the capital, constitutional amendments, land reforms, and others.

2.2 Freedom of speech.

Freedom of speech is an integral part of society, guaranteeing its development and protection of citizens' rights. According to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, it includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers⁴⁹. However, the meaning of freedom of speech implies something more. According to the authors Trager and Dickerson, it begins with the creation and improvement of ideas, including political ones, in particular, with "talking to yourself"⁵⁰. In order to prevent this, governments can take wide-ranging repressive measures. There may not be a direct way to limit thinking, but what a person thinks can be limited indirectly. When self-expression is suppressed, people don't see

⁴⁶ Isaac Webb. Social Media Sites Blocked in Kazakhstan on 25th Anniversary of Independence. Advox Global Voices. 16 December 2016. <https://advox.globalvoices.org/2016/12/16/social-media-sites-blocked-in-kazakhstan-on-25th-anniversary-of-independence/>

⁴⁷ Paolo Sorbello. Kazakhstan's Authorities Backtrack on Freedom of Assembly. The Diplomat. March 02, 2020. <https://thediplomat.com/2020/03/kazakhstans-authorities-backtrack-on-freedom-of-assembly/>

⁴⁸ RFE/RL's Kazakh Service. Kazakh Activist Sentenced For Links To Banned Political Group. Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. March 03, 2021. <https://www.rferl.org/a/kazakh-activist-sentenced-banned-koshe-party/31131494.html>

⁴⁹ Universal Declaration of Human Rights. <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>

⁵⁰ Trager, R. and Dickerson, D. (1999) Freedom of Expression in the 21st Century. 1st ed. SAGE Publications. p.14,32. Available at: <https://www.perlego.com/book/1004416/freedom-of-expression-in-the-21st-century-pdf> (Accessed: 16 August 2022).

the ideas they have to offer or that will stimulate their own original thoughts. The authors also point out that usually, the coercion comes from the government, NGOs, or from ourselves as self-censors. Given the freedom or freedom from, if there is a threat or fear of the use of physical, moral or legal force, this may be considered coercion⁵¹. Julian Baggini mentioned that healthy democracy requires more than periodic elections, it requires that all those in positions of power and responsibility are held to account. The media plays a key role here. That's why countries are not fully functioning in democracy. Freedom, in this regard, is not just about the absence of constraint, but of the absence of any kind of domination. A free society is one where we can look each other in the eye, not up or down at each other, and one where there is civility and trust. Where there is free speech, people do not just have the freedom to talk, they are heard⁵². Government coercion often occurs in order to control the political views of the majority. By maintaining a majority and avoiding accountability for their political actions, governments usually retain power for as long as necessary. Obviously, a threat, especially a legal or physical one, not only stops certain criticisms from spreading but also sends a message to others, making the people who were in charge to look wrong. The lack of dominance that Baggini talked about was very important in the case of Kazakhstan. Because these days dominance has destroyed the alternative when it comes to important information. Coercion, emanating only from the state itself, hindered democratic development. Criticism or the idea of overthrowing is unacceptable to the authorities. That is why, instead of creating independent media with various alternatives, pro-governmental dominant media was created, which showed the picture only from one side, from the side pleasing to the state.

Dariga Nazarbayeva took control of the national media in the late 1990s. The largest national agency at that time, Khabar, was under the control of Nazarbayeva. At the same time, her husband Rakhat Aliyev bought the weekly newspaper "Caravan" and the "KTK" national television⁵³. The main broadcast television channels and radio stations, as well as newspapers, were completely under the control of the Nazarbayev family. At that time, Rakhat Aliyev did not comment on the ownership of the media, but after the conflict with Nursultan Nazarbayev,

⁵¹ Trager and Dickerson, 1999, p 32.

⁵² Fox, C. and Saunders, J. (2019) Media Ethics, Free Speech, and the Requirements of Democracy. Chapter 2. The Ethics of Interrogation. Julian Baggini. 1st edn. Taylor and Francis. Available at: <https://www.perlego.com/book/1379679/media-ethics-free-speech-and-the-requirements-of-democracy-pdf> (Accessed: 15 August 2022).

⁵³ Bruce Pannier. Kazakhstan: Media Ownership Leaves Little Room For Independence. Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. May 25, 2007. <https://www.rferl.org/a/1076718.html>

he clarified the issue. In short, Aliyev was the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Kazakhstan to the OSCE and international organizations in Vienna in 2007. In the same year, he had a conflict with Nazarbayev. After that, a criminal case was initiated against him under the article "theft of people". The decision to extradite him from Vienna was taken immediately. He announced his transition to the opposition and called all the accusations politically motivated. After the conflict, in an interview, he admitted that he was, as he called himself, "a media magnate" of Kazakhstan. Aliyev admitted that he and his wife, Dariga Nazarbayeva, control the media in Kazakhstan and have stakes in "KTK", "Khabar" and the "KazakhstanToday" news agency⁵⁴.

As of today, international organizations assess freedom of speech in Kazakhstan as not free. According to the Reporters Without Borders Index, Kazakhstan ranked 122 out of 180 countries. The media landscape has been destroyed by repressive reforms since 1997. As a result of this, the media in Kazakhstan is the propaganda channel of the Kazakh regime. Only independent channels such as "Za Nami Uzhe Vyekhali", "Guiperborei", "Protenge", founded by journalists, provide non-state alternative and critical information. Last years, there has been an increase in Internet users, but they face access obstacles and content restrictions, including censorship. After the resignation of President Nazarbayev in 2019, many users have become noticeably more outspoken. However, state propaganda and censorship still remain strong⁵⁵. Even the Kazakh journalists themselves admit that the Kazakh media do not cover human rights and corruption issues effectively enough, because they face obstacles. Responses to interviews indicated that there is a shortage of investigative journalists in Kazakhstan and that journalism is pro-government.⁵⁶ The following subheadings will examine the persecution of journalists and the activities of the "Tan" and "Irbis" channels, which were closely associated with the DCK.

⁵⁴ Interview of Rakhat Aliyev to the Caravan agency from February 2007. The full text is available in: https://online.zakon.kz/Document/?doc_id=30089016&pos=5;-88#pos=5;-88

⁵⁵ Reporters Without Borders, Europe and Central Asia, Kazakhstan, Index 2022. <https://rsf.org/en/country/kazakhstan>; Freedom House, Freedom on the net 2021, Kazakhstan. https://freedomhouse.org/country/kazakhstan/freedom-net/2021#footnoteref1_ceyzmn

⁵⁶ The status of media and the role of social media in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Research by the Institute for War and Peace Reporting; «Giving Voice, Driving Change – from the Borderland to the Steppes - Cluster III: Central Asia” Project with the financial support of the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. https://cabar.asia/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Status_of_media.pdf

2.2.1 Kazakhstani mass media and journalists.

Kazakhstan has come to this situation due to its policy of freedom of speech over the past 25 years. During this period, many journalists became victims of political repression. There were dozens of reports of violations inside and outside of Kazakhstan. Some of them, which became resonant, attracted the attention of the public. In addition to the seizure of national media by Dariga Nazarbayeva in 1997, journalists and human rights activists were persecuted. One of the first victims was Kazakh journalist and human rights activist *Sergei Duvanov*. Since the late 1990s, he has been active in human rights and journalistic activities. Over the years, he headed the work of the independent information and analytical agency Politon, the opposition newspaper “Fahrenheit 451”, was the editor of the bulletin of the Kazakhstan International Bureau for Human Rights and Rule of Law, headed the opposition newspaper “Vremya Zero”, and then “Eurasia.org”. His newspapers were repeatedly closed by the authorities, and he himself openly criticized the government. The "last straw" was in 2002 when he wrote the article “Molchanie yagnyat” (Silence of the Lambs from Russian) related to the Kazakhgate corruption scandal⁵⁷. Kazakhgate is a major corruption scandal involving high-ranking Kazakh officials, including President Nazarbayev himself and American businessman James Griffin, in order to secure contracts for oil from the Tengiz field to Western companies. Subsequently, more than \$100 million were found in Swiss banks⁵⁸. Then Griffin was arrested and diplomatic relations between the two countries escalated. At the end of August, he was severely beaten at his entrance, and the National Security Committee initiated a criminal case against him for insulting the honor and dignity of the President in connection with his latest articles. In November 2002, Duvanov planned to travel to the U.S. to speak in Washington D.C. and New York on the political situation in Kazakhstan. A few days before departure, he was detained by the authorities on charges of rape of a minor. All these accusations were suspicious against the backdrop of Duvanov's opposition activities. He denied all charges and called the case fabricated⁵⁹. Obviously, the authorities could not allow the oppositionist, who accused Nazarbayev of corruption, to speak in the United States about the political situation in Kazakhstan. Duvanov's trial has drawn widespread criticism both in Kazakhstan and abroad. In particular, the OSCE called for an

⁵⁷Kazakhstan: Duvanov Defiant. Convicted journalist continues to fight for full acquittal. Institute for War and Peace Reporting. <https://iwpr.net/global-voices/kazakhstan-duvanov-defiant>

⁵⁸Reports: Kazakhstan. Human Rights Watch. https://www.hrw.org/reports/2004/kazakhstan0404/3.htm#_fn15

⁵⁹Duvanov, a prominent 49-year-old journalist known for his criticism of Kazakh authorities, was arrested on suspicion of raping a minor. The journalist was officially charged on November 6, 2002. Committee to Protect Journalists <https://cpj.org/data/people/sergei-duvanov/>

immediate review of the case, citing numerous procedural violations and a clear lack of evidence⁶⁰. Because of public pressure, Duvanov was released in 2004 under probation control.

Another victim of political repression was Kazakh journalist *Yermurat Bapi*, lately chairman of the National Social Democratic Party. Bapi worked as a correspondent for the most influential newspapers of that time, such as *Kommunisticheskaya Pravda*, *Socialist Kazakhstan*, *Yegemen Kazakhstan*. In the late 1990s, he was Deputy General Director of Kazakh Radio. In 1998, he was appointed head of the publishing project "DAT"⁶¹. Briefly, about the name of the newspaper, the Kazakhs have such an expression "Dat, taksyr!", which in Kazakh means "I demand the word!". It was used during the time of the khans (kings), when the khan was told so, he could not refuse and had to listen. By using historical-traditional rhetoric, the editors attracted the attention of readers and the ruling class. "DAT" is justifiably called the first independent newspaper of Kazakhstan. Yermurat himself noted in an interview that Akezhan Kazhegeldin was the first sponsor of the Dat newspaper. Kazhygeldin helped create a newspaper, open an enterprise, and publish the first issues. Later, the newspaper found citizens and businessmen who supported the democratic press, and the newspaper began to be published at its own expense⁶². Since its foundation, the "DAT" newspaper or journalists participating in the project have been involved in reporting 50 times. The newspapers of the "DAT" project were closed several times, and each time the newspaper went under the names - "Soldier", "Zhuma-Times", "Ayna Plus" and others⁶³. The newspaper often wrote about democracy, human rights, corruption and so on and openly criticized the government, publishing the same article about Kazakhgate. The newspaper has been repeatedly sued. In 2009, editor-in-chief Yermurat Bapi was sentenced to two years for violating the law on accounting and financial reporting, false entrepreneurship, and deprived of the right to engage in journalistic activities for a period of five years⁶⁴. He later agreed to become the newspaper's unofficial head, referring to himself as the newspaper's "chief

⁶⁰ OSCE calls for immediate review of trial of Kazakh journalist Duvanov. Press release from 28 January 2003. Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe. <https://www.osce.org/odihr/54994>

⁶¹ Larisa Chernenko. OSDP vydvinet svoego kandidata na vybory prezidenta. [The OSDP will nominate its candidate for the presidential election] zakon.kz news agency. April 22, 2019. [In Russian] <https://www.zakon.kz/4966886-osdp-vydvinet-svoego-kandidata-na.html>

⁶² Danabek Zhalmырza. Pervaya kazahskaya oppozitsionnaya gazeta za 9 let privlekalas' k sudu 28 raz. [The first Kazakh opposition newspaper has been brought to court 28 times in 9 years]. Radio Azattyq RFE/RL. April 21, 2007. [In Russian] <https://rus.azattyq.org/a/1180810.html>

⁶³ See the history of editorial office of "obshchestvennaya pozitsiya" | datnews. October 10, 2018. [In Russian] <https://datnews.info/redaktsiya/>

⁶⁴ Kazakhstan: Publisher Jailed as Media Conference Opens. Eurasianet. April 23, 2009. <https://eurasianet.org/kazakhstan-publisher-jailed-as-media-conference-opens>

reader". Also, unknown people entered the editorial office several times and beat journalists. But since 2020, the persecution has stopped. Bapi gives three reasons for this. Firstly, DAT is included in the register of international organizations protecting human rights and freedom of the press. He delivered a speech before the U.S. Congress. Secondly, DAT is under the constant control of the international "Committee to Protect Journalists" and the organization "Article-19" (Great Britain). Thirdly, during 22 years of work, the newspaper has become famous and has a high level of social significance⁶⁵. Taking into account the experience of Duvanov and Bapi, it can be concluded that international reaction and criticism in some cases can influence the methods of political persecution. The persecution is still taking place, but depending on the scale of international attention, it may be toned down. Obviously, public outcry played a key role in the release of both journalists. Bapi was unable to publish articles due to legal and financial problems.

Unfortunately, there were also cases when journalists from opposition publications were killed. So in July 2004, *Askhat Sharipzhanov* was hit by a car in the city of Almaty. Sharipzhanov was the editor of the opposition "Navigator" website. Askhat wrote articles on political topics that affected the relationship between Nazarbayev, ex-premiers Tasmagambetov and Balgimbayev. Shortly before his death, he interviewed well-known opposition leaders Nurkadilov and Sarsenbayuly, the recording of the interview has been lost. His relatives do not believe in his accidental death, as a very strong blow to the head was inflicted, but the organs are intact, which is not typical for such an incident⁶⁶.

2.2.2 "Tan" and "K-plus".

Press freedom has been under threat since the 1990s due to the dominance of state media. There were independent newspapers, but they were persecuted. Kazakhstan's national television and other sources of influence have been under the control of President Nazarbayev since the mid-1990s. National television, as the main source of information in the country,

⁶⁵ Ermurat Bapi: «Segodnyashnie SMI, osobenno prikormlennye vlastyami, — bezzubye». [Ermurat Bapi: "Today's media, especially those lured by the authorities, are toothless"]. Radio Azattyq RFE/RL. August 5, 2020. [In Russian] <https://rus.azattyq.org/a/kazakhstan-almaty-dialogi-yermurat-bapi-interview/30728047.html>

⁶⁶ Sharipjanov, 40, an editor of the popular opposition news Web site Navigator, was hit by a car on the evening of July 16 as he was crossing a street, according to local and international press reports. Committee to Protect Journalists. July 20, 2004. <https://cpj.org/data/people/askhat-sharipjanov/>; Diya Kenesova. Askhata prodolzhalı repressirovat' i mertvym. [Askhat continued to be repressed and dead.] Radio Azattyq RFE/RL. July 24, 2004. [In Russian] <https://rus.azattyq.org/a/1180317.html>

was completely controlled by the state⁶⁷. Obviously, criticism of the government on national television was banned. But this trend has been broken several times. Such cases include the channels "Tan", "Irbis", and "K-plus". "Tan" TV Company was founded in the 1990s by Leila Khrapunova (at that time Beketova) and became the first 100% private TV company in the post-soviet area broadcasting in Almaty and Almaty region. In 1998, the channel was also sold, and Bakhytzhan Ketebayev was appointed its head⁶⁸. After the appointment of Ketebaev, the channel changed its agenda to a political one. Opposition movements were mainly supported, and information was provided independently, without state propaganda. But a turning point in the history of the channel occurred in 2001 during a demonstration of the Democratic Choice of Kazakhstan. On January 19, 2002, the constituent assembly of the DCK was held in Almaty, in which about 1,000 delegates from all regions took part. The meeting was broadcast by the "Tan" TV channel. "Tan" was also financed by Ablyazov, the leader of the DCK. The "Irbis" channel from Pavlodar began to face problems earlier this year after the retransmission of a series of "Tan" programs dedicated to Mukhtar Ablyazov⁶⁹. Since that time, attacks on the TV studio "Tan" began. On the night of March 29, 2002, explosive bullets were fired from a sniper rifle at the antenna-feeder device of the "Tan" TV station. For several months, the channel could not go on the air due to damage. After repairing the damage, another incident occurred. Unknown people drove three nails into the channel's antenna, damaging it⁷⁰. At the same time, the licenses of both channels were suspended for various reasons. Under pressure from the authorities, the "Tan" channel was sold to other owners, and the "Irbis" channel was closed. Under the leadership of the new owner, Armanzhan Baitasov, criticism of the authorities has stopped on the "Tan" channel. The channel continued to broadcast on national television, creating its own new author's programs. Unfortunately, the first attempts of civil society to establish a dialogue with the authorities were severely suppressed by state structures, from lawsuits to the closure of channels. At that time, Kazakhstanis saw on the national TV channel that the authorities could be criticized. However, this time was not enough for a full impact on the population. Since these were not long and round-the-clock programs with an audience of many millions, but only a short burst

⁶⁷ Cummings, S. (2002) Kazakhstan. 1st edn. Bloomsbury Publishing. p. 27. Available at: <https://www.perlego.com/book/883675/kazakhstan-pdf> (Accessed: 22 August 2022).

⁶⁸ From the official biography of Leila Khrapunova. Available at: <https://www.leila-khrapunova.com/en/life-story/>

⁶⁹ Antoine Blua. Kazakhstan: Government Clamps Down On Independent Media. Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. March 08, 2002. <https://www.rferl.org/a/1099032.html>

⁷⁰ Peter Baker. New Repression in Kazakhstan. The Washington Post. June 10, 2002. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/2002/06/10/new-repression-in-kazakhstan/5cb0c8ae-bed4-4378-9792-2cd447f9d6a0/>

of information, the authorities quickly liquidated and returned everything under their control. But after the sale of “Tan”, the former head Bakhytzhan Ketebaev did not leave journalism. Already in 2007, he became the head of the “K-Plus” channel, which became the largest independent broadcasting TV channel in Central Asia. Only this time, in addition to Kazakhstan, the channel covered the main political events in other countries of Central Asia and became very popular among the local population. The main office was in London, UK. “K-Plus” TV Company was the first satellite company to break through censorship in the television space of Central Asia⁷¹. The main investor of the channel was Mukhtar Ablyazov. When creating the channel, past experience related to the “Tan” channel was taken into account. Therefore, the main office was not in Kazakhstan. There was a central company that broadcast from a satellite and purchased content from different manufacturers. There were several structures on “K-plus”, which means studios that worked in a "sleep" mode. If the broadcasting studio had problems, the signal was immediately transmitted to one of these structures. The signal transmission could be done in 10 minutes⁷². Thanks to this management policy, the channel broadcast until its closure. The channel covered the tulip revolution in Kyrgyzstan, and the Zhanaozen protests in Kazakhstan. The audience was also attracted by a series of interviews with opposition figures and former politicians from Central Asian countries. Interviews with Rakhat Aliyev, Viktor Khrapunov, Tajik oppositionist Dodojon Atovulloev, and others were shown on the air. The channel often faced blocking and by the decision of the Bostandyk district Court of Almaty, the broadcasting of the channel was prohibited. In 2013, Ketebaev and Ablyazov ended their cooperation, and the channel stopped broadcasting. Thus, the channel, which provided political coverage not only for Kazakhstan but also for other countries of Central Asia, ceased to exist due to state pressure and internal disagreements in the vision of the channel's policy.

2.4 Judicial system and telephone justice.

The importance of equality and an independent judicial system has been noted by philosophers and scientists since ancient times. For example, Plato argued that the law can protect against tyranny. In his opinion, the law can be an “ally of the whole city” to protect

⁷¹ Dilbegim Mavloniy. Sorvana translyaciya po kanalu «K-plyus» fil'ma o lidere uzbekskoj oppozicii. [The broadcast of a film about the leader of the Uzbek opposition on the K-plus channel was disrupted]. Radio Azattyq RFE/RL. March 11, 2010. [In Russian] https://rus.azattyq.org/a/Mukhamed_Salikh_Kplus_TV/1979795.html

⁷² Alisher Yelikbayev. Bahytzhan Ketebaev: «My razoshlis' vo mneniyah s Ablyazovym!» [Bakhytzhan Ketebayev: "We disagreed with Ablyazov!"]. Voxpopuli.kz portal of author journalism. June 13, 2013. [In Russian] <https://voxpopuli.kz/1186-bakhytzhan-ketebaev-my-razoshlis-vo-mneniyakh-s-ablyazovym/>

itself from tyranny⁷³. Plato's pupil, the ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle claimed that the law ought to be supreme above all; for where the laws have no authority, there is no constitution⁷⁴. The independence of judges is the guarantor of justice and the development of society. However, in some situations, even with reforms or control, the desired result cannot be achieved. Because, how it is written (how it should be in practice) and how it is implemented differ for various reasons. Regarding the situation of Kazakhstan, everything is written correctly in theory, since the Constitution protects democratic principles. The Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan recognizes and guarantees human rights and freedoms on its territory. Human rights and freedoms are recognized as absolute and inalienable and belong to everyone by birth. Concerning the judiciary, the independence of judges and non-interference in their administration is also guaranteed by the fundamental law of the country⁷⁵. Judicial reforms were carried out, which were reflected in the 1995 Constitution. As a result, judges have become more independent. Constitutional laws were also adopted to support the financial independence of a judge, as well as the social and legal protection of a judge. Unfortunately, everything that is written in the Constitution is not always applied in practice or is not applied as it should be, taking into account the basic principles of Human Rights. Judicial reforms carried out in Kazakhstan have not yielded positive results. There is still a high level of corruption among judges, which is expressed in a very low level of public trust in the courts⁷⁶.

A fair question arises here: why doesn't this work? If society needs it and it is guaranteed by the constitution, in addition, the state itself carries out reforms to improve the judicial system. The explanations for this may be different: the population itself is looking for a corrupt way to solve problems and the so-called "surface" for corruption is widespread, poor management and service, excessive pressure from the authorities on the judiciary, and simply an independent judiciary requires democracy. All these answers are somehow connected with each other and, of course, affect an independent court, but, from my point of view, the main obstacle is the *telephone justice*, which started during the Soviet period. Shortly, the telephone call from the party boss in the middle of the night—"telephone justice"—telling the judge

⁷³ Plato's the Republic. Book IX. New York :Books, Inc. (1943)

⁷⁴ Aristotle's Politics. Book IV, part IV. Oxford :Clarendon Press. (1905)

⁷⁵ Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated August 30, 1995. Available at Official website of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan: https://www.akorda.kz/en/official_documents/constitution

⁷⁶ Yesembayeva, Z. and Zhanuzakova, L. (2021) Kazakhstan's judiciary. 1st edn. Scholars' Press. P. 6. Available at: <https://www.perlego.com/book/3217300/kazakhstans-judiciary-pdf> (Accessed: 26 August 2022).

how to decide the case⁷⁷. All orders from the boss go diagonally, but not to their immediate subordinates. Those who do not obey such orders are usually deprived of awards, privileges, and even positions. Certainly, all these orders are unofficial, they are not documented in any way and are transmitted in person, and most often by phone. Charles A. Schwartz, in describing corruption in the Soviet Union, points to hidden political rules that are functionally necessary and politically justified for the efficient functioning of the Soviet system. The interests of the Communist Party prevail over the legitimate ones. Thus, the ruling class defends the party's institutional position of infallibility for the smooth running of the system⁷⁸. Ledeneva A. and Shushanyan N. talk about parallel connections and the experience of the past that still exists in the post-Soviet space. If the telephone justice of the Soviet period was associated with direct or indirect directives of the Communist Party, now it is associated with interference in the decision-making process by law enforcement administrative authorities. Most often, telephone law is used to influence judicial decisions and interfere with judicial procedures⁷⁹. Here, the authors cite only Russian law as an example, however, since the Soviet Union had an influence on the entire post-Soviet space, it can be said that the experience of telephone justice exists in all authoritarian countries of the post-Soviet space, including Kazakhstan.

The main goal after the constitutional changes was to preserve the system itself. Therefore, as in Soviet times, when it came to criticizing the government and personality of Nazarbayev, political rules had a great advantage over legal ones. Also, after creating multiple cases, it is not necessary to call each judge and tell them what to do. Experience will tell others what needs to be done. But this “what needs to be done” is a kind of source for determining the corruption of judges. Kim Lane Scheppele has written that if political governors' instructions are fed into a system of the supposed independence of the judiciary, judges must at least be corrupt in order to carry them out. But if judges had to implement the political orders to keep their jobs, then surely these jobs involved no “judgment” per se. When judges are directly instructed on what and how to do in this or that case, this destroys their

⁷⁷ Stephen G. Breyer, Comment: Liberty, Prosperity, and a Strong Judicial Institution, 61 *Law and Contemporary Problems* 3-5 (Summer 1998). Available at: <https://scholarship.law.duke.edu/lcp/vol61/iss3/1>

⁷⁸ Schwartz, C. A. (1979). Corruption and Political Development in the U. S. S. R. *Comparative Politics*, 11(4), 425–443. <https://doi.org/10.2307/421869>

⁷⁹ Ledeneva, A. , & Shushanyan, N. (2008). Telefonnoe pravo v Rossii [Telephone justice in Russia.] *Bulletin of Public Opinion. Data. Analysis. Discussions*, (3), 42-50. [In Russian]

independence⁸⁰. From Kim's article, it can be concluded that a lot depends on the judges themselves, that is, to what extent they were forced to comply with this or that political rule, and how this will affect their future activities. That is, will this be the beginning of a corrupt career, for which the state allegedly gave permission for this, or this decision was made against the judge's will and should not be repeated under any circumstances? M. Pakirdinov, a retired Kazakhstani judge with 40 years of experience, claims that government officials are trying to resolve the issue with judges by phone, correspondence, or in person. The request of a superior leader turns into instruction or assignment. At the same time, the request is disguised, saying: "Look according to the law and decide according to justice." Very often, a civil servant has to fulfill the requests of relatives, friends, or acquaintances. The former judge noted that being part of the system, he had to apply telephone justice and be part of it. However, there are a lot of honest civil servants who conscientiously fulfill their duties⁸¹. The pernicious influence of interference on the judiciary, as Kim noted, did not go unnoticed in society.

The existence of all these "friendly" requests and political rules was obvious in society. For this reason, there have been many scandals involving judges. For example, when a judge drunk knocked down a police car (a criminal punishment in Kazakhstan), the judge lost money in a casino and much more. All these scandals were at the regional or city level. The Supreme Court fulfilled the necessary obligations, that is, dismissed the incapacitated, announced comments and reprimands, conducted an internal investigation, and so on. But, in 2019, there was one of the most famous corruption cases with the involvement of the judge of the Supreme Court. Judge of the Supreme Court Zhanguttinov was detained for accepting a bribe in the amount of 7 thousand US dollars through his intermediary. The bribe was given by another judge Abdusattarova (Judge of the Al-Farabi District Court of Shymkent) to be transferred from one court to another. According to court decision No. 2 of the Baikonur district of the city of Nur-Sultan, Zhanguttinov was sentenced to 5 years and 3 months in prison, and Abdusattarov to 5 years. Both were removed from office and deprived of the right

⁸⁰ Scheppele, K. (2002). Declarations of independence: judicial reactions to political pressure. In S. B. Burbank, & B. Friedman (Eds.), *Judicial independence at the crossroads: An interdisciplinary approach* (pp. 227-279). SAGE Publications, Inc., <https://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781452229577.n10>

⁸¹ Ni odnogo chinovnika v Kazahstane ne privlekli k otvetstvennosti za telefonnoe pravo [Not a single official in Kazakhstan has been prosecuted for telephone law]. "Caravan" Media portal. February 7, 2017. [In Russian] <https://www.caravan.kz/gazeta/ni-odnogo-chinovnika-v-kazahstane-ne-privlekli-k-otvetstvennosti-za-telefonnoe-pravo-pakirdinov-389962/>

to hold public office for life⁸². There have been corruption scandals involving a judge in Kazakhstan before, but the case of corruption between judges, including a judge of the Supreme Court, goes far beyond what is appropriate.

Despite the scandals, the Supreme Court is taking steps to fight corruption in the system. There is a Department of Internal Security whose task is to detect and prevent corruption among judges and administrative civil servants. The Department of Internal Security has territorial divisions, and it's accountable only to the Head of the Supreme Court and the head of the Department. According to a collection published by the Supreme Court, from 2013 to July 2021, 104 judges were dismissed from their positions for negative reasons. In addition, 60 of them have been released in the last 3 and a half years. Over the past three years, 30 judges have become subjects of criminal prosecution, and 15 of them have been sentenced to imprisonment⁸³. The amount of dismissed judges is growing which is quite productive. It means there are measures to combat corruption. Most likely these measures will be effective in combating only certain levels of corruption, among civil servants and judges. This will reduce the influence of tribalism among them, which is also problematic at present. With increased controls and protections, as well as requirements for judges, it is less likely that judges will take the risk of complying with the requests of their friends, relatives and others. But these measures will definitely not affect political pressure on judges. Political pressure will no longer be a problem when the government changes and when the independence of the judiciary is ensured. Unfortunately, in Kazakhstan, there is neither one nor the other. Perhaps this explains the low level of public confidence in the judiciary.

One of the questions of the survey conducted during the research was: Do you think it is necessary to carry out judicial reform to change the situation in Kazakhstan? 78.8 % (99 responses) of respondents think the country needs judicial reform because of the high level of corruption. Some respondents, 13.7% (17 responses), believe that in the current situation local reforms are sufficient. accordingly, only 10.5% (13 responses) of the respondents believe in the fairness of the judiciary and the independence of the courts. Optional responses include

⁸² Sot para berý jáne alaiqyq jasaýǵa oqtalý faktisi boyynsha sýdialarǵa qatysty úkimdi jarialady [The court announced the verdict against the judges on the fact of bribery and attempted fraud]. Press- release of the court city of Nur-Sultan. [In Kazakh] <https://astana.sud.kz/kaz/news/sot-para-beru-zhne-alayaktyk-zhasauga-oktalu-faktisi-boyynsha-sudyalarga-katysty-ukimdi>

⁸³ Justice in Kazakhstan: realities, trends, prospects. Collection from 22.10.2021. Published on Supreme Court of the Republic of Kazakhstan (<https://sud.gov.kz>)

responses such as "I don't know" and "Just changing the judiciary is not enough."⁸⁴ The fact that the overwhelming majority prefer to change the judiciary once again highlights the fact that citizens face corruption on a daily basis. Maybe not all of them necessarily face corruption in the courts, but they do face it within the system and obviously understand that the current judiciary is unable to deal with it for the reasons mentioned above. Most likely, citizens believe that the independence and fairness of judges depend on their political position and the ability to negotiate with them. The judiciary will be independent at a certain level unless this is contrary to political issues or policies. Even if a Supreme Court judge can be bribed, it's not just who takes the bribe, it's who gives it. In the case of the Supreme Court, another judge gave the bribe. Obviously, this is not acceptable and changes are required. This is the only way to explain such a high level of distrust of the judicial system among respondents.

2.4.1 High-profile cases.

The reputation of the judges was not immediately questioned. Several cases are known when telephone justice was applied openly and brazenly. Considering them, it becomes clearer why there is such a low degree of trust in judges. Dozens of politically motivated cases have taken place in Kazakhstan since independence. The typical scenario was to indict, arrest, sentence and, if it resonated, lighten the sentence. However, not always everything was according to the standard procedure. In some cases, the situation has not changed, and in others. But Kazakhstan has never been famous for politically motivated fatal cases. The issue is about the cases of *Zamanbek Nurkadilov* and *Altynbek Sarsenbayuly*. The first was the akim of the city of Almaty of the Almaty region and the Chairman of the Agency for Emergency Situations of the Republic of Kazakhstan. On March 11, 2004, having gathered a press conference, he read out an open letter to Nazarbayev. In the letter, he sharply criticized his policies in recent years, accusing Nazarbayev of usurping power and urging him to step down as president of the country. The answer was not long in coming. The next day Nurkadilov was dismissed from his post. After the death of Askhat Sharipzhanov, he also blamed Nazarbayev for his death. After his release from office, he actively supported the opposition and encouraged Nazarbayev to open debate. Nurkadilov claimed that he had documents confirming the corruption of officials. After the presidential elections, he wanted to bring several thousand protesters to the square in Almaty. Three weeks before the election,

⁸⁴ See the survey results, question 8.

Nurkadilov was found murdered in his home. The official conclusion of the investigation is suicide. The most interesting fact is that he had three gunshot wounds, two in the chest and one in the head⁸⁵. Such death of the oppositionist, especially after his statements, caused a lot of discussions. People did not believe in the official version of the investigation, as many were perplexed how a person could shoot himself twice in the chest, and then in the head. One way or another, the court accepted this version of the murder and the case was closed. But not only Nurkadilov, whose death caused a heated discussion among the people.

February 13, 2006, another opposition leader, Altynbek Sarsenbayuly, was found dead along with his bodyguard and driver. The former Minister of Information and Ambassador of Kazakhstan to the Russian Federation was the co-chairman of the opposition Ak Zhol party. In 2004, he accused the government of electoral fraud and left office. After that, he actively participated in opposition activities. In 2005, Sarsenbayuly told reporters that the “Khabar” news agency was owned by Dariga Nazarbayeva and that it financed the private First Channel Eurasia, embezzling public funds⁸⁶. High-ranking officials of Kazakhstan were involved in the murder. According to investigators, Sarsenbayuly was detained by officers of the National Security Committee. After one of the employees, Ibragimov killed Sarsenbayuly. The head of the Committee and several managers resigned. The instigator of the crime, according to the investigation, was Utembaev, the former chief of staff of the Senate of the Republic of Kazakhstan. But the victim's side did not believe that he was the customer, claiming that the instigator was someone from Nazarbayev's entourage, in particular his son-in-law Rakhat Aliyev. After the conflict between Aliyev and Nazarbayev, Ibragimov changed his testimony and stated that the crime was ordered by Rakhat Aliyev. Utembaev was released in 2014⁸⁷. At the same time, there were many controversial decisions about the instigator of the crime. At that time, none of the parties could prove that he was from the Nazarbayev family. Only after the conflict between the ex-president and his son-in-law, the testimony was changed. But earlier such results could not be achieved. In 2006, the side of the victim argued that Utembaev could not organize such a crime and it was necessary to interrogate high-ranking

⁸⁵ Kazis Toguzbayev. Smert' Zamanbeka Nurkadilova. Tri vystrela i put' k konservacii rezhima. [The death of Zamanbek Nurkadilov. Three shots and the way to conservation mode] Radio Azattyq RFE/RL, November 12, 2020. [In Russian] <https://rus.azattyq.org/a/30942210.html>

⁸⁶ Arai Zhauperova. KTO TAKOJ ALTYNBEK SARSENBAEV. [WHO IS ALTYNBEK SARSENBAEV]. February 14, 2022. Mass.media news website. [In Russian] <https://masa.media:7081/ru/site/kto-takoy-altynbek-sarsenbaev>

⁸⁷ Altynbektiń qazasy. Qastandyqtyń artynda kim tur? / Azattyqtyń derekti filmi [The death of Altynbek. Who is behind the assassination? / Documentary of Azattyq] February 11, 2021. Radio Azattyq RFE/RL. [In Kazakh] <https://youtu.be/6kLI-8oGReU>

officials. Even after the change of testimony, the situation is not clear. Many questions still remain open. Why did Rakhat Aliyev do this and was it his own decision or someone else's order? Is it worth trusting Rakhat Aliyev in this situation, given his past management experience?

In addition to these two cases, there are many other politically motivated non-fatal cases. For example, the case of *Mukhtar Dzhakishev*, the former head of “Kaz Atom Prom” (National Atomic Company of Kazakhstan, producer and supplier of natural uranium), who was most likely arrested for close relations with Mukhtar Ablyazov. In 2003, he acted as a guarantor for ex-minister Mukhtar Ablyazov and asked to be released from prison. Already in 2010, when Ablyazov left Kazakhstan and began to openly criticize Nazarbayev, during a meeting of the Council of Entrepreneurs, the ex-president noted that everyone who was awarded for him should be held accountable⁸⁸. The European Parliament recognized Dzhakishev's case as politically motivated and called for his full rehabilitation and immediate release⁸⁹.

More unfortunate was the fate of *Aron Atabek*, who served 15 years in a strict regime and died because of health problems after being released on parole. Kazakh poet and dissident had been criticizing the government and system since USSR. In 2006, residents of the border districts of Shanyrak and Bakai in Almaty were dissatisfied with the actions of the authorities regarding their residential buildings. Atabek has long defended the interests of citizens, trying to be an intermediary between the parties. The court found that many buildings were built or sold illegally. After the court decided to demolish the building, there were mass clashes between police officers and citizens. Atabek was found guilty of organizing riots, taking hostages and killing a police officer⁹⁰. He denied all accusations and demanded a full acquittal. Although, according to the human rights activist, Evgeny Zhovtis, his guilt has not been fully proven⁹¹. The report to the UN Special Rapporteur on torture noted physical torture and other violations by the staff of the colony against Atabek, as well as the refusal of the

⁸⁸ Asylkhan Mamashuly. DELO MUHTARA DZHAKISHEVA. 15 FAKTOV. [THE CASE OF MUKHTAR DZHAKISHEV. 15 FACTS]. Radio Azattyq RFE/RL. [In Russian] <https://rus.azattyq.org/a/kazakhstan-mukhtar-zhakishev/30170791.html>

⁸⁹ European Parliament resolution of 14 March 2019 on the human rights situation in Kazakhstan (2019/2610(RSP)). Available at: <https://www.perseus-strategies.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Human-Rights-in-Kazakhstan-2019-2610.pdf>

⁹⁰ Paolo Sorbello. Kazakhstan's Poet, Political Dissident Aron Atabek Dies. The Diplomat. November 30, 2021 <https://thediplomat.com/2021/11/kazakhstans-poet-political-dissident-aron-atabek-dies/>

⁹¹ Kazis Toguzbayev. Shanyrak 12 let spustya. Sobytiya, o kotoryh zabyvayut? [Shanyrak 12 years later. Events that are forgotten about?] Radio Azattyq RFE/RL. July 13, 2018. [In Russian] <https://rus.azattyq.org/a/shanyrakskiye-sobytiya-12-let-spustya/29356950.html>

head of the colony to send Atabek to the medical unit⁹². All four cases clearly show that the judiciary in Kazakhstan is dependent on certain political situations, especially when it comes to opposition leaders or supporters. In all cases, there is an official version set by the authorities and another version usually provided by civil society. Some cases were hard to believe, such as the case of Nurkadilov. But common features for all of them are the recommendations of the international community to ensure a fair and open trial, as well as violations noted by human rights organizations following the proceedings.

Concluding remarks.

Since 2000, the opposition began to actively form in Kazakhstan. However, it was not systematic. Many politicians of that time did not like that Nazarbayev had special privileges and huge influence in the country. Public associations and political parties were created. However, the government was not going to establish a dialogue with the opposition. The authorities perceived the opposition as a threat. The activities of the DCK and Ak Zhol were severely suppressed. Their leaders and founders were persecuted for political reasons. Many of them emigrated to eastern countries and some left opposition activities. Due to internal disagreements and pressure from the authorities, a clear opposition has not formed in Kazakhstan that unites all representatives of this agenda. However, it is wrong to say that there is no opposition in Kazakhstan. In recent years, youth movements have been created. Opposition activities were also created by former politicians who left the country.

TV channels, newspapers, and journalists who covered the activities of the opposition or provided independent information were persecuted for political reasons. In the ratings for evaluating the freedom of speech of various independent organizations, Kazakhstan has always occupied the last position. Human rights organizations also noted the infringement of freedom of speech. In addition to obstacles to the free activity of journalists, criminal cases, and torture in prisons, there were also cases of murders, in which the opposition blamed the authorities. However, despite the persecution, independent opposition channels were created and continued to operate for several more years. In recent years, independent Internet resources have been actively created, which are trying to convey non-pro-government information to the Kazakh audience.

⁹² See the biography from his website. Aron Nutushev, Aron Edigeev since 2006. Poet Aron Atabek. <https://aronatabek.com/biography>

In order to maintain their system and their rules, the authorities actively used “telephone justice”. This called into question the independence of the judiciary, which, in turn, caused a high distrust of the judiciary among the population. The active intervention of the authorities has also become one of the reasons for the emergence of a high level of corruption, including in the judicial system itself. There were also high-profile cases against the opposition. As a result of these cases, distrust of the authorities and the court grew in society. The Supreme Court is actively pursuing reforms to eliminate corruption in the courts, but it is still difficult to talk about the full confidence of the population in the judiciary, especially when there is a political context in the case.

Chapter 3. January protests and their prerequisites.

The third chapter of the thesis is aimed at describing the January protests themselves. The first subparagraph describes the protest moods of the population before the January events. The 2011 protests in Mangistau Oblast, the 2016 land reform protests, the capital renaming protests, and other events created a new trend of protests in the country never seen before. Data from independent organizations were used to assess the level of protests in Kazakhstan. The second subparagraph is devoted to the protests themselves. A brief assessment was given of the actions of the authorities and the protesters. The third subparagraph analyzes the main demands of the protesters, which were divided into political and socio-economic ones. It also discusses why protests turned into riots in some regions and what prompted citizens to take such action. This incident is explained by the poverty of the population and the political crisis in the country.

3.1 Zhanaozen events as the first prerequisites. Government-society relations.

The persecution of democratic institutions, as well as the political struggle between the authorities and the opposition, could not bypass Kazakhstan. Social inequality, corruption and low income of the population have created tension in society. Apparently, everyone understood that President Nazarbayev had been holding power for too long, and it seemed that he would never leave his post. It is for this reason that any problem in society, one way or another, can become an impetus for a surge in mass protests. Such a trigger in 2011 was the protests in the Mangystau region in the city of Zhanaozen and the village of Shetpe. The protests in the Mangystau region in 2011 can be considered the first prerequisites of the January events. Briefly, employees of the subsidiaries of the state oil and gas company “KazMunayGas” (“Karazhanbasmunai” and OzenMunaiGas) demanded better working conditions and wages. On May 26, 2011, more than three thousand oil workers of the “OzenMunaiGas” company in Zhanaozen went on strike to protest against working conditions. The protests ended on December 16, 2011, when the police opened fire on unarmed residents. Over the next few days, the authorities cut off communications and blocked the entrance to the city, while hundreds of people were detained, many of them were tortured. Kazakh authorities said they were responding to the riots. But the events of that day

were preceded by an unresolved seven-month strike by oil workers in Zhanaozen⁹³. According to official data, 16 people were killed in the Zhanaozen events, and more than a hundred were injured. During the police shooting, several local residents who had nothing to do with the oil workers' actions were also killed. Five police officers were sentenced to five to seven years in prison for illegally using weapons against protesters. 13 out of 37 people accused of "organizing mass riots" were sentenced to terms of imprisonment from three to seven years. 21 people were sentenced to probation, three were acquitted⁹⁴.

There are three main reasons why the protests in Mangystau can be considered as the first prerequisite for the January protests:

1. In addition to the dissatisfaction of workers in the oil sector, there were other social problems that eventually grew into large-scale ones. Working conditions and wages are one reason, but not the only one. Kazakhstani political scientist Dosym Satpayev very clearly defines the true reasons for the protest. He believes that the roots of this conflict lie in the long-awaited social discontent both in relation to the unfair system of income distribution and in the defiant disregard for the opinion of ordinary people by officials at all levels and top managers of national companies, the same citizens of the country as "servants of the people"⁹⁵. Also, using the example of Zhanaozen, Satpayev notes about "delayed action mines" that are laid in all regions of the country, which is a wake-up call for the government. Here, the political scientist points out that if these social problems and political issues are not resolved in time, these "mines" can explode in any region of the country. In 2011, the protests in the Mangystau region did not receive support throughout the country at that time but became the first wave of mass discontent.
2. The fact is that law enforcement officers opened fire on protesters and civilians. Basically, the issue was raised because of the actions of the opposition and independent journalists. When it became obvious that it was impossible to hide it, the government began to hold responsible persons accountable. However, the opposition

⁹³ Mihra Rittmann. Workers' Rights Denied in Kazakhstan: Zhanaozen's Legacy. Human Rights Watch. December 15, 2021. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/12/15/workers-rights-denied-kazakhstan-zhanaozens-legacy>

⁹⁴ Orken Zhoyamergen. S chego nachalis' protesty neftyanikov? Vospominaniya ochevidcev. [How did the protests of oil workers begin? Eyewitness memories] Radio Azattyq RFE/RL. May 27, 2020. [In Russian] <https://rus.azattyq.org/a/kazakhstan-zhanaozen-oilmen-2011/30636710.html>

⁹⁵ Dosym Satpayev. Holodnaya ten' ZHanaozena. [Zhanaozen's Cold Shadow] Forbes Kazakhstan. December 15, 2016. https://forbes.kz/life/thoughts/dosyim_satpayev_holodnaya_ten_janaozena

has always maintained that the real numbers of victims were not fully disclosed. In Kazakhstan, there have been clashes with the police before, detentions, torture, and so on. However, fire on the demonstrators was opened for the first time since independence. Definitely, there were logical explanations such as loss of control, violation of laws by protesters, attacks on personal property, and so on. However, the fact that the demands of the protesters were not satisfied or properly considered within six months justified the actions of the protesters. The opposition used this for their further actions, those who were against the authorities initially became more radical, the neutrals became a little against it, and even the most loyal had to reconsider their views. In a word, politics touched everyone, and this time not in favor of the current government.

3. The scale and consequences of the protests in Mangystau. The President declared a state of emergency in the region and arrived in Zhanaozen. The opposition covered the events in every possible way. The UN Human Rights Committee expressed concern about the deaths of 10 people, a picket was held in London near the Kazakh Embassy against the dispersal of strikers in Zhanaozen, a photo exhibition "Zhanaozen - Maidan: A Chronicle of Executed Protests" was held in Kyiv, and others. Protesters and police were prosecuted. Numerous documentaries and investigative journalism have been produced, further underscoring the heightened attention to these events. In addition, for the first time after gaining independence, Zhanaozen showed from its own experience that the people can protest and demand in case of disagreement. And if the demands are not met, this can lead to serious consequences. The loss of control over the city, the failure to comply with the requirements for six months, and the shelling of the strikers only showed the incompetence of the authorities in such cases.

3.1.1 The trend of protests.

Zholdasova and Molchanova investigated mass dissociative disorder in Zhanaozen and found that the city was clearly divided into "oil workers" and "others". Citizens who do not work in the oil industry and earn ten times less than oil workers, but who were equally affected by the events of December 2011, were offended by the unequal distribution of attention and funds coming to the Mangystau region. There was a situation in the city in which "protest trauma" was used as a tool of legal blackmail of different levels of administration. The success of a few residents in obtaining privileges inspired the rest, micro-

strikes became a common means of influencing various levels of government⁹⁶. The government has only partially solved the social problem in the region by providing benefits to oil industry workers. However, the rest of the population, who saw the "success" of the oil workers, also began to use the protests as leverage. Those who were not ready for such actions simply stayed away with their grievances. But in addition to the Mangystau region, this method of achieving the goal began to spread throughout the republic.

Data from independent organizations such as the Kazakhstan International Bureau for Human Rights and Rule of Law (KIBHR) and the Armed Conflict and Events Data Collection Project (ACLED) have been used to assess protest sentiment in Kazakhstan over the past few years. According to the KIBHR, 1053 peaceful assemblies were held in Kazakhstan from 2010 to 2020. The organization takes into account all protest actions, such as rallies, single pickets, road closures, hunger strikes, and attempts to reach the president and others. The peak falls in 2019 when the number of peaceful assemblies reached 227⁹⁷. High activity of citizens' protests was noted in the eastern regions and in the cities of Almaty and Nur-Sultan. The lowest rate is in the central and northern regions of the country in such cities as Zhezkazgan, Pavlodar, Kostanay, and others. The KIBHR notes that peaceful rallies were mainly political, social, and economic in nature. At the same time, the reasons changed every year; in 2010 and throughout 2018–2020 the meetings had political overtones. The peak of peaceful political gatherings occurred in 2019 (78%). The growth of political rallies since 2018 is based on the activities of the DCK, banned in Kazakhstan, calling for protests. Socio-economic reasons were always present during peaceful assemblies and were the main ones in 2014-2015⁹⁸. KIBHR also notes the presence of police officers at all peaceful assemblies. Often, during unsanctioned peaceful assemblies, the attention of the police is directed not to ensuring control over the situation, but to stopping the assembly or dispersing it and detaining participants. The number of participants in peaceful assemblies brought to criminal and administrative liability for 2015-2020 is 1,774 citizens. The peak of peaceful assemblies for

⁹⁶ Molchanova E., Zholdasova Zh. Massive dissociative rasstroistvo v Zhanaozene: predposylki i mekhanizmy formirovaniya [Mass dissociative disorder in Janaozen: predictors and mechanisms of development] (Russian). Vestnik psikhatrii i psikhologii Chuvashii [The Bulletin of Chuvash Psychiatry and Psychology], 2015, vol. 11, no. 4, pp. 137-138.

⁹⁷ See the table number 2.

⁹⁸ See the table number 3.

political reasons coincides with the peak of detentions, that is, in 2019, 1,345 citizens were detained for participation⁹⁹.

ACLEDD started keeping statistics of Kazakhstan since 2018. According to them, from 2018 to 2021, 2,657 protest actions were held in Kazakhstan. Among them are 6 battles, 60 riots, 2,492 protests, 1 explosion/remote violence, and 98 cases of violence against civilians¹⁰⁰. According to ACLED, demonstrations over the lack of basic infrastructure and public services took place across Kazakhstan. The protesters demand that the authorities ensure the maintenance of roads and reliable access to water and electricity¹⁰¹. Based on the statistics of the two organizations, it is obvious that the events in Zhanaozen and their results have become a kind of the impetus for protest moods in Kazakhstan. In different years there were different numbers, but the protests themselves never stopped. Citizens have learned to respond to certain political decisions that do not suit them, as well as to demand improvement and change.

After the protests in Zhanaozen, protests against land reform, protests of mothers with many children, and protests against the election results became resonant. In 2016, mass unauthorized protests took place in Kazakhstan against new amendments to the Land Code. The protests began on April 24, 2016, in the city of Atyrau, three days later there were rallies in the cities of Aktobe and Semey, as well as many single actions throughout the country. This time, the protests were not concentrated in a separate region but spread to certain regions of the country, that is, Atyrau received support. As a result, the president declared a moratorium on change. The land protests marked the beginning of a new trend of protests: if one region protests against certain political decisions, the other must support it, which will be reflected in the January protests in the future. Since initially the protests began in the city of Atyrau and received support in other regions. If earlier protests took place only in a certain region, then since 2016 society has awakened to the realization of collective responsibility in this regard. This was confirmed in 2019 after the presidential elections, when rallies were held in the country before and after the elections. According to political scientist Dosym Satpaev,

⁹⁹ Doklad o monitoringe soblyudeniya prava na svobodu mirnyh sobranij v Respublike Kazahstan v 2018-2022 gg. [Report on monitoring compliance with the right to freedom of peaceful assembly in the Republic of Kazakhstan in 2018-2022.] Kazakhstan International Bureau for Human Rights and Rule of Law. December 2020. [In Russian] https://bureau.kz/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/report-freedom-assemblies_rus-1.pdf

¹⁰⁰ Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLEDD) Dashboard. <https://acleddata.com/dashboard/#/dashboard>

¹⁰¹ Asena Karacalti and Curtis Goos. Central Asia Data Update: 2018-2020. Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLEDD). September 24, 2020. <https://acleddata.com/2020/09/24/central-asia-data-update-2018-2020/>

“the transition of consciousness” has already taken place¹⁰². The young part of the population, considered apolitical or loyal to the authorities, suddenly became interested in politics and declared its demands. After the results of the 2019 elections, important issues appeared on the agenda, which the authorities could not answer at that time, which, in principle, became the reason for the protests. In addition to the legitimacy of the election, which was questioned by many independent organizations, there were other open questions that did not have clear answers. Summing up, the mood in Kazakh society after the resignation of Nursultan Nazarbayev and the presidential elections was as follows:

- *Political instability and uncertainty.* There was a dual power in Kazakhstan, which officials did not recognize. Tokayev was officially the president of the country, while Nazarbayev had the status of Elbasy and was the chairman of the Security Council. The Security Council coordinates the implementation of a unified state policy in the field of ensuring the national security and defense capability of the Republic of Kazakhstan in order to maintain internal political stability, protect the constitutional order, state independence, territorial integrity, and national interests of Kazakhstan in the international arena. All these duties should belong only to the president and no one else. The fact that the President of the Security Council has the same powers as the President calls into question the status of the President himself. Nazarbayev resigned, but there was no resignation as such since all the levers of influence were still in his hands due to his status. Nazarbayev's participation in the meeting of the heads of state of the Customs Union, official meetings with Kazakh politicians, as well as the immediate renaming of the capital in his honor by Tokayev, further created incomprehensibility.
- *High protest mood formed over the past decade.* The Zhanaozen events of 2011 were the first impetus for mass protests that engulfed the entire city. The peculiarity of the protests is that the authorities lost control of the situation and opened fire on the protesters. After these events, protest moods within the country intensified. There were many mass protests and single pickets. Protests against land reform have given rise to a new idea, according to which if one region protests, then at least three or four other regions provide support. After 2016, the protests have already become different. If before 2016 they were at the level of one city, then after 2016, in most cases, the

¹⁰² Peter Trotsenko. Dosym Satpaev: «tranzit soznaniya» uzhe proizoshel [Dosym Satpayev: the "transition of consciousness" has already occurred] AzattyqTV, Radio Azattyq RFE/RL. June 7, 2019. [In Russian] <https://rus.azattyq.org/a/kazakhstan-interview-political-analyst-dosym-satpayev/29985986.html#comments>

interregional level prevailed, which was confirmed in 2019 after the renaming of the capital. Nazarbayev's resignation in 2019 should have been a mitigating factor. However, even after the resignation of the president, the situation did not improve. The renaming of the capital and the presidential elections only worsened the situation. The transit of consciousness, which Satpayev said occurred, but there was no complete transit of power.

- *Socio-economic problems.* The reason for the protests in Zhanaozen in 2011 was poor working conditions and low wages. Given the availability of natural resources and the profit from them, the protesters were unhappy with the distribution of income. After 2011, when the demands of the protesters were partially satisfied, the inhabitants of the region were divided into two groups, that is, oil workers and the rest. This concept is also present in other cities where natural resources are being extracted. The acuteness of social problems escalated after prolonged protests by mothers of many children, who demanded benefits and claimed that they were not able to support their families. According to the official data of the “Finprom” analytical portal, in Kazakhstan, the share of the population with incomes below the subsistence level has increased to 5.7 percent in 2020. In 2019, the share of the population with incomes below the subsistence level was 4.3 percent. This is the worst figure since 2011. Thus, the population with incomes below the subsistence level amounted to 1.1 million people¹⁰³.

One of the survey questions was related to the causes of the January mass protests. Question: apart from the increase in gas prices, what is the reason for the January protests? 67.1% (77 responses) of those surveyed believe that poverty and other social problems have caused the protests. The reason was the irremovability of power, according to 37.1% (46 responses) of respondents. 12.1% (15 responses) believe that this is due to the persecution of democratic institutions. The remaining 7.3% (9 responses) offered their own options such as all the reasons are connected, people's fatigue from power, and the mental state of citizens¹⁰⁴. More than half of them were of the opinion about social problems and poverty, and a third of them consider the irremovability of power to be the main reason.

¹⁰³ Kazahstancy bedneyut: zhitelej s dohodami nizhe prozhitochnogo minimuma stalo na 20% bol'she [Kazakhstanis are getting poorer: there are 20% more residents with incomes below the subsistence minimum] Finprom.kz - analytical portal. 12 April 2021. [In Russian] <http://finprom.kz/ru/article/kazahstancy-bedneyut-zhitelej-s-dohodami-nizhe-prozhitochnogo-minimuma-stalo-na-20-bolshe>

¹⁰⁴ See the survey results, question 1.

3.2 Bloody January.

The mass protests in January 2022 in the society were called "*Qandy qañtar* ", which means bloody January in Kazakh. The protests were the largest in the independent history of Kazakhstan. The protests began in the city of Zhanaozen and then spread to other cities in Kazakhstan. Events developed very quickly and escalated into riots. A state of emergency was declared in the country, and the CSTO troops were sent in¹⁰⁵. According to ACLED, more than 80 protests took place in Kazakhstan between January 1 and 7. The demonstrations were mainly concentrated in the Atyrau and Mangistau regions. The protests were violent in cities such as Almaty, Shymkent, and Aktobe. Otherwise, 95% of the demonstrations were peaceful¹⁰⁶. The total amount of damage caused to state buildings during the January events in Kazakhstan amounted to 30 billion tenge (63.4 million US dollars)¹⁰⁷. During the riots in the city of Almaty, 1,585 business entities located at 1,940 sites were affected, with a total amount of damage estimated at more than 94.5 billion tenge (199.6 million US dollars)¹⁰⁸. In August 2022, the Prosecutor General's Office released a list of 238 citizens who died in the January protests. The circumstances of their death were not disclosed¹⁰⁹. The protests completely stopped on January 11, and on the 12th the situation returned to normal throughout the country. From January 13, the authorities began to gradually lift the state of emergency.

3.2.1 Brief assessment of the situation.

On January 2, protesters in Zhanaozen disobeyed the local akim because he failed to fully meet their demands. Unlike the 2011 protests, this time the protesters in Zhanaozen did not riot or encroach on other people's property. They simply gathered en masse in the central square, blocked the road, and demanded that gas prices be changed. Another difference from

¹⁰⁵ See the chronology of the events.

¹⁰⁶ Josh Satre and Ryskeldi Satke. Demonstrations in Kazakhstan: From Energy Price Hike to Political Crisis. Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED). January 13, 2022. <https://acleddata.com/2022/01/13/demonstrations-in-kazakhstan-from-energy-price-hike-to-political-crisis/>

¹⁰⁷ Yanvarskie sobytiya: nazvana summa ushcherba gosudarstvennym zdaniyam [January events: the amount of damage to state buildings was named] Tengrinews. March 14, 2022. [In Russian] https://tengrinews.kz/kazakhstan_news/yanvarskie-sobyitiya-nazvana-summa-uscherba-gosudarstvennyim-464155/

¹⁰⁸ KYSHIMIZ BIRLIKTE – SILA V EDINSTVE. [STRENGTH IN UNITY] National Chamber of Entrepreneurs of the Republic of Kazakhstan "Atameken". January 18, 2022. [In Russian] <https://atameken.kz/ru/news/46448-kshMZ-brlkte--sila-v-edinstve>

¹⁰⁹ Qañtar oqıǵasynda qaza tapqan tulǵalardyń tizimi [List of people who died during the January events] Press Service of the Prosecutor General's Office of the Republic of Kazakhstan. August 16, 2022. [In Kazakh] <https://www.gov.kz/memleket/entities/prokuror/press/news/details/413195?lang=kk>

2011 is massive support from all regions. Such regions as Zhezkazgan, Pavlodar, and Kostanay, which were considered passive, did not stand aside. This once again emphasizes the high protest moods that have formed in Kazakhstan in recent years. But the protests did not stop even after the authorities announced that gas prices would remain the same. Gas prices were affected differently in different regions since there was no fixed gas price across the country. Naturally, in other regions, gas has risen in price, but not twice as much as in the Mangystau region. The protests have not stopped because they have already outgrown the gas price issue. Initially, the reason for taking to the streets was the situation in Zhanaozen, as a support rally, but this was only one of the reasons why many people took to the streets. The promises of the authorities that “the demands of the people were heard and we will fix it” did not work. It has already been about bringing to justice those who brought the country to such a state. Therefore, the protesters switched to political and social demands.

Other important events during the protests were the entry of the CSTO troops into the territory of Kazakhstan and the statement by President Tokayev about 20,000 bandits and terrorists who were preparing a coup d'état. Tokayev used Article 4 of the Collective Security Treaty, which provides for the immediate provision of necessary assistance, including military, as well as support with the means at their disposal in the event of aggression (an armed attack that poses a threat to security, stability, territorial integrity, and sovereignty) at the request of states -members from states¹¹⁰. But also Article 5 of the CSTO Charter provides for the principle of respect for independence, voluntary participation, equality of rights and obligations of member states, non-interference in matters falling within the national jurisdiction of member states¹¹¹. According to Russian sources, the CSTO peacekeeping contingent numbered 2,030 servicemen. Of these, 1,480 servicemen are from Russia, 200 from Tajikistan, 150 from Kyrgyzstan, and 100 each from Belarus and Armenia¹¹². Others, citing various sources, claim that 3,600 peacekeepers arrived in January. But regardless of the number, the common fact is that the vast majority of the peacekeepers were from Russia¹¹³.

¹¹⁰ COLLECTIVE SECURITY TREATY, dated May 15, 1992. Available at: https://en.odkb-csto.org/documents/documents/dogovor_o_kollektivnoy_bezopasnosti/#loaded

¹¹¹ CHARTER OF THE COLLECTIVE SECURITY TREATY ORGANIZATION, dated October 07, 2002. Available at: https://en.odkb-csto.org/documents/documents/ustav_organizatsii_dogovora_o_kollektivnoy_bezopasnosti_/#loaded

¹¹² Mirotvorcy ODKB v Kazahstane: sostav i glavnaya zadacha missii. [CSTO peacekeepers in Kazakhstan: composition and main task of the mission] RIA Novosti. January 10, 2022. [In Russian] https://ria.ru/20220110/mirotvortsy_kazahstan-1767231827.html

¹¹³ Oleg Shakirov. CSTO Peacekeeping Operation in Kazakhstan: an Overview. Medium. January 8, 2022. <https://medium.com/@shakirov2036/csto-peacekeeping-operation-in-kazakhstan-an-overview-e1fcc6494e4e>

Due to Russian influence within the organization and the large number of Russian military personnel during the mission, it is often referred to as a Russian intervention.

The CSTO did not participate in the revolutions in Kyrgyzstan in 2005, 2010, and 2020, in interethnic conflicts in the south of this country in 2010, in the hostilities between Armenia and Azerbaijan in Nagorno-Karabakh in the fall of 2020. But at Tokayev's request, in January 2022, for the first time in its history, the CSTO immediately intervened in the situation. If the protests in Kazakhstan are considered as internal affairs of the state, then the intervention of the CSTO is completely illegal. However, the official authorities refer to the fact that there was an attempt by 20,000 terrorists to carry out a coup d'état, the threat of which came from outside. This version of what happened is unlikely for many political scientists. Yuri Zhdanov, president of the Russian branch of the International Police Association, believes that the 20,000 terrorist announcement is an exaggeration. "According to the CIA, 20-30 thousand people are the number of all the militants of the Islamic State (the organization is banned in Kazakhstan) at the time when the group controlled the maximum number of territories in Syria and Iraq in 2014," he concluded. Zhdanov also believes that there are currently no extremist religious groups in Kazakhstan¹¹⁴. Jennifer Brik Murtazashvili, president of the Society for Central Eurasian Studies, claims that President Tokayev has provided no evidence that foreign terrorists are operating in Kazakhstan. She believes that Tokayev's ultimate goal is to maintain control and that the government has taken advantage of the citizens' legitimate right to protest against fuel prices, economic grievances, corruption and turned the game into an inter-elite one¹¹⁵.

The public reaction to the accusations of terrorists was also not long in coming. One of the activists, Kunay Abdiev, told the BBC Russian Service: "We did not commit terrorist attacks or vandalism ... We protested peacefully. But at some point, a group of young guys drove up and immediately went to seize the akimat. We couldn't stop them. They smashed cars and smashed windows."¹¹⁶ By evening, young protesters unfurled a banner reading "*Qarapaıym*

¹¹⁴ Andrey Yashlavsky. Yury Zhdanov assessed the versions of events in Kazakhstan: Who was behind the mutiny. Moskovsky Komsomolets. 17 January 2022. Available at: <http://ipa-russia.org/en/yury-zhdanov-assessed-the-versions-of-events-in-kazakhstan-who-was-behind-the-mutiny-who-was-the-puppet-master-of-the-pogroms-in-the-central-asian-republic/>

¹¹⁵ TRT World Now. Presidents Tokayev, Putin discuss ways to quell unrest in Kazakhstan. January 9, 2022. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AKRhLVDxAAC>

¹¹⁶ Abdujalil Abdurasulov. Kak protesty v Kazahstane pererosli v tragediyu. Krovavyy yanvar' v Almaty glazami ochevidcev [How the protests in Kazakhstan turned into a tragedy. Bloody January in Almaty through the eyes of eyewitnesses] Russian service BBC. January 22, 2022. [In Russian] <https://www.bbc.com/russian/features-60070252>

halyqpyz, biz terrorist emespiz” (“We are a peaceful people, we are not terrorists”) and began to sing the national anthem in Almaty¹¹⁷. From the above, it can be concluded that Tokayev's statement about 20,000 terrorists has not received wide recognition either in Kazakh society or outside the state. Most likely, this statement of the president was made for two reasons. The first is to justify the introduction of the CSTO troops by referring to the threat from external forces. Since the CSTO charter itself provides for non-interference in the internal affairs of a sovereign state. The second is to somehow justify the current situation in the country. Recognition of these protests as a mistake of the state, in which the country is in a state of political and economic stagnation with a high level of corruption, would logically require the resignation of the president.

3.3 Demands of the protesters and their consequences.

The protests that began in Zhanaozen quickly spread throughout the country. Even after the authorities announced that gas prices would remain the same, the protests did not stop. The demands of the protesters changed during the protests depending on the current situation and the reaction of the authorities. One of the questions of the thesis survey is devoted to this topic. The survey participants were asked the following question: in your opinion, what was the main demand of the protesters? 62.9% (78 responses) believe that the protesters demanded a complete change of power. 14.5% (18 responses) of the survey participants believe that the matter is in the renaming of the capital from Nur-Sultan to Astana and the termination of the status of the First President. 37.9% (47 responses) of the respondents refer to the increase in social benefits and wages. The remaining 7.3% (9 responses) offered their options, such as all the options are correct, people have run out of patience, and gas prices¹¹⁸. More than half of the respondents are sure that the main demand is a complete change of power. The answer about the personality cult of Nazarbayev did not stand aside, although it received a minimum of votes. The answer about social status gained a third of the votes. This confirms that the underlying demands were political and socio-economic. The following are arguments regarding political and social demands.

¹¹⁷ Zangar Omar, Sanat Nurbekov. "BTR-men kelip, toqtamaj qyrdy". Almatyda 6 qantarda alanda bolgan zhigittin angimesi ["They came in armored personnel carriers and killed without stopping". The story of the guy who was on the square on January 6 in Almaty] Radio Azattyq RFE/RL. February 18, 2022. [In Kazakh] <https://www.azattyq.org/a/kazakhstan-almaty-shooting-in-almaty-bek-syrym/31710189.html>

¹¹⁸ See the survey results, question 7.

Political demands are basic and start from the personality cult of Nazarbayev to a complete change of power. One of the common features of protest actions in all regions is the chant of "*Shal ket*" (get out old man). It is unknown how and when this scan first appeared. However, it was first used en masse during protests against land reform in 2016¹¹⁹. In addition, chanting became widely used after the resignation of Nazarbayev, when he was still chairman of the Security Council and had quite influential powers. Here, the term "Shal" refers to Nazarbayev and the term "Ket" demands his complete withdrawal from the political life of the country. However, the chanting is addressed not only to Nazarbayev himself. More broadly, it refers to the government system he created, including his family and friends¹²⁰. Another fact confirming the connection between the protests and the fight against the personality cult of Nazarbayev is the event in the city of Taldykorgan. On January 5, protesters demolished a monument to the ex-president in the central square¹²¹. Photographs illustrate that the protesters tore down the monument by hanging ropes on the monument and tying the end to a truck. Due to the scale and rapid spread of the protests, Nazarbayev voluntarily stepped down as chairman of the Security Council. At the same time, the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan was dismissed. But the protests didn't end there. The protesters believe that only serious political changes can guarantee real changes in the life of the country. For example, activists in Zhanaozen made five demands to the authorities: regime change; conducting direct elections for the head of each region (now these officials are appointed by the president); return of the 1993 Constitution (it limited the power of the president); civic activists should not be prosecuted; the coming to power of people who are not connected with the current ruling elites¹²². With the resignation of Nazarbayev, the protests did not stop, on the contrary, they became larger and more violent. The government and officials in Kazakhstan frequently resign. But often this does not lead to significant changes. Probably, the protesters simply did not believe that this time the authorities would fulfill their promises. Protesters began to seize the buildings of city akimats, police stations,

¹¹⁹ «Narod ne hochet Ukrainy». Pochemu sejchas v Kazahstane krichat «Shal ket» ["The people don't want Ukraine." Why are they shouting "Shal ket" in Kazakhstan now] Online newspaper, Ukraine. May 23, 2016. [In Russian] <https://ukraina.ru/20160523/1016427918.html>

¹²⁰ Bruce Pannier. After Kazakhstan's 'Bloody January,' Can Toqayev Ever Gain The People's Support? Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. January 25, 2022. <https://www.rferl.org/a/kazakhstan-toqayev-bloody-january/31671033.html>

¹²¹ Helen Holmes. Kazakhstan Protestors Have Torn Down a Monument to a Loathed Former President. Observer. January 6, 2022. <https://observer.com/2022/01/kazakhstan-protestors-have-torn-down-a-monument-to-a-loathed-former-president/>

¹²² Olga Ivshina. "Vlasti pereocenili spokojstvie": chego zhdet' ot protestov v Kazahstane? ["The authorities overestimated calmness": what to expect from the protests in Kazakhstan?] BBC Russian Service. January 5, 2022. [In Russian] <https://www.bbc.com/russian/news-59886446>

the buildings of the “Nur Otan” party, the regional buildings of the National Security Committee and the building of state television channels. That is, people began to destroy structures that are directly related to the current government. This confirms that the matter is not only in the resignation of Nazarbayev and the government. The protesters demanded more radical changes, that is, a complete change of power. It should be noted that only government facilities and business objects were affected during the protests. Business objects and private property of individuals were damaged or stolen only in the city of Almaty. In other cities, this case was not observed. Neither schools, nor hospitals, nor individual residential buildings were damaged by the protesters.

Along with political demands, socio-economic ones were voiced almost throughout the country. Approximately the same requirements sounded in different regions and they all concerned the daily life of citizens. For example, in Karaganda, protesters are unhappy with rising food prices, fuel prices, and low wages; in Kostanay, people voiced the problem of housing, the high cost of fuel, and high prices for food; in Atyrau, residents demanded lower food and fuel prices¹²³. In the city of Zhezkazgan, miners and residents of the city during the protests demanded a reduction in the retirement age for miners, lower prices and guarantees of freedom for the protesters¹²⁴. “No one would come here if we had a good situation. Poverty brought us together, life became very difficult. It is impossible to feed children a month for a salary of 50-70 thousand tenge (\$105-147),” Azattyq RFE/RL quotes one of the protesters from the scene in the city of Aktobe. At the same time, the journalist notes that the protesters spoke about the difficulties simply and without concealment, in their eyes, there was only fear with an admixture of hope¹²⁵. These socio-economic demands, which were voiced along with the political ones, highlight the urgency of the problems noted in the previous chapter. Many residents lived below the poverty line or closer to it. High unemployment, low wages, and ever-increasing food prices simply left residents no choice but to protest.

¹²³Mitingi v Kazahstane: chto proiskhodit v regionah [Rallies in Kazakhstan: what is happening in the regions] Tengrinews. January 5, 2022. [In Russian] https://tengrinews.kz/kazakhstan_news/mitingi-v-kazahstane-chto-proishodit-v-regionah-458275/

¹²⁴Elena Weber. V Zhezkazgane shahtery i zhiteli mitinguyut vtoroj den' u zdaniya gorodskogo akimata [In Zhezkazgan, miners and residents rally for the second day at the building of the city akimat] Radio Azattyq RFE/RL. January 6, 2022. [In Russian] <https://rus.azattyq.org/a/31642267.html>

¹²⁵Zhanagul Zhursin. «Nas privela nishcheta». Proiskhodivshee v Aktobe glazami reportera. ["Poverty has brought us." What happened in Aktobe through the eyes of a reporter] Radio Azattyq RFE/RL. January 14, 2022. [In Russian] <https://rus.azattyq.org/a/nas-privela-nischeta-proishodivshee-v-aktobe-glazami-reportera/31653233.html>

3.3.1 Why did the protests become violent?

Since there was a massive gathering of people during the January protests, clashes between police and protesters were quite expected. Given the previous experience of protests, it should be noted that in almost all cases the protesters were detained. Since previous protests had largely failed, it was clear that this time the townspeople would be more demanding and assertive. The protests were indeed more persistent, which led to a loss of control over the situation in Almaty. In addition to the destruction of state buildings, there was an encroachment on private property. There were robberies of shopping centers, riots, and so on.

During the survey of the thesis work, the respondents were asked the following question: In your opinion, why did the rallies in Almaty turn into mass riots? As expected, this question was not answered with the majority of votes. The answers were more or less proportionally divided among the suggested answers. 27.4% (34 responses) believe that the government of the Republic of Kazakhstan has lost control. 37.8% (48 responses) are of the opinion that due to the poor social situation of the population, residents began to encroach on someone else's personal property. 39.5% (49 responses) of respondents believe that the terrorists used this situation to stage a coup d'état¹²⁶. This percentage of responses is explained by the fact that there is still no transparency about what actually happened in Almaty. For example, on February 1, a protest rally was held under strict police control in front of the Prosecutor General's Office of Almaty. The protest was directed against the detention of innocent people and police violence, as well as demanding a transparent investigation into the deaths of several demonstrators in early January¹²⁷. If the first and second answers were seen as putting the responsibility on the state, i.e. the first - the government of the Republic of Kazakhstan lost control, the second - the people were forced because of the economic situation, then this option prevails in the majority vote.

Political scientist Dosym Satpaev believes that the reason for the robberies is the lost generation, which was formed from the actions and inaction of the current government. In his opinion, more than 70% of the citizens of Kazakhstan are either socially unprotected segments of the population, or the proto-middle class, located between the middle class and the poor. Poverty in Kazakhstan is often the result of a lack of social justice and public control

¹²⁶ See the survey results, question 2.

¹²⁷ Vladimir Rozanskij. Kazakhstan one month on from protests. AsiaNews. February 4, 2022. <https://www.asianews.it/news-en/Kazakhstan-one-month-on-from-protests-55069.html>

over government revenue and spending¹²⁸. He connects these factors of poverty and the "lost generation" with the situation in Almaty. "... The lost generation, those people who became victims of failed socio-economic reforms. This is an imbalance in the development of regions - most regions are depressed, with a decline in education and culture. I emphasize once again: if a lost generation appears in the country, this is primarily the fault states... If now we do not help pull children out of poverty, tomorrow they will again join the ranks of those who will throw out social aggression - for any reason... The desire to attribute everything to external factors, to 20,000 terrorists is a manifestation of tunnel consciousness, an attempt to drive yourself into a dead end of self-deception." he concluded¹²⁹.

Taking into account the economic situation in the country, Satpaev's claims were also confirmed by statistics and forecasts of some organizations. The World Bank estimates that poverty in Kazakhstan will increase to 12-14 percent in 2020 from a baseline of 6 percent in 2016. The spread of the pandemic brought global activity to a halt in the second quarter of 2020 and led to a decline in global demand and prices for oil, Kazakhstan's main export¹³⁰. According to UNICEF, 15.6% of children live in families with the lowest incomes. Differences between the regions of Kazakhstan in terms of child poverty are significant. Social assistance coverage tends to be pro-poor and reduce income poverty, but the level of benefits for children in low-income families is too low. 46% of the population lives in rural areas and has a higher level of poverty. Only about a quarter of rural households receive social assistance. Many children in rural families live in poverty without receiving social assistance¹³¹. In addition, the cause of poverty is not education itself, available in Kazakhstan, but unequal access to quality education. As of 2021, Kazakhstan ranks 71st for the quality of education, which once again highlights the reason for the growing poverty in the country¹³². But along with poverty in Kazakhstan, there was another phenomenon that was clearly manifested in society. According to the 2021 Knight Frank Wealth Report, the number of

¹²⁸ Dosym Satpayev. V Kazahstane formiruetsya novoe «poteryannoe pokolenie» [A new "lost generation" is being formed in Kazakhstan] Forbes Kazakhstan. February 3, 2021. [In Russian] https://forbes.kz/life/opinion/dosyim_satpaev_v_kazahstane_formiruetsya_poteryannoe_pokolenie/

¹²⁹ Tat'yana Panchenko. Dosym Satpaev: Kazahstanu nuzhna total'naya chistka gosapparata i lyustraciya. [Dosym Satpayev: Kazakhstan needs a total purge of the state apparatus illustration.] Forbes Kazakhstan. January 26, 2022. [In Russian] https://forbes.kz/massmedia/dosyim_satpaev_va_storonnik_lyustratsii_totalnoy_chistki_eto_80-90_gosapparata_i_natskompaniy/

¹³⁰ Kazakhstan's Economy to Recover Modestly in 2021, But COVID-19-induced Poverty on the Rise. Press Release NO: 2021/ECA/63. World Bank. January 29, 2021. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2021/01/29/kazakhstan-economic-update-december-2020>

¹³¹ A SITUATION ANALYSIS OF CHILDREN IN KAZAKHSTAN 2019. UNICEF. <https://www.unicef.org/kazakhstan/media/4611/file/Situation%20Analysis-2019.pdf>

¹³² Education Rankings by Country 2022. World Population Review. <https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/education-rankings-by-country>

super-rich people has increased. According to forecasts, in Kazakhstan, the number of the richest people will increase by 33 percent, which is the eighth result in the world (2020-2025)¹³³. Also, the famous "Pandora Papers" of the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists published in October 2021 became resonant in the country. The Organized Crime and Corruption Research Project alleges that former Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev's unofficial third wife received \$30 million for next to nothing. The \$30 million payment follows a series of share transfers involving six offshore companies, all but one registered in the British Virgin Islands¹³⁴. Corruption scandals concerned not only the ex-president but also the current one. The Russian non-profit Foundation Anti-Corruption Foundation (Team of the Russian oppositionist Alexei Navalny) published data from the Russian real estate registry. The foundation claims that since 2010 Timur Tokayev, the son of Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, has owned a 196-square-meter apartment in Moscow. Another apartment with an area of 167 square meters has been owned by the wife of the ex-president, Nadezhda Davydovna Tokaeva, since 2000¹³⁵.

Several important conclusions can be made from the above information. Firstly, the population grew poorer day by day. People often expressed their dissatisfaction even before the January 2022 protests. However, their demands were not heard. The authorities of Kazakhstan have not carried out the necessary political and economic reforms to improve the social life of the population. Quarantine during COVID-19 also affected the situation. Due to dependence on the oil industry, the already low incomes of citizens have decreased. Therefore, during the January protests, the population became more aggressive. Secondly, there were looters, robbers, thieves and other crimes during the protests. However, it is a mistake to blame the "20 thousand" terrorists for all reasons of the riots and illegal actions. This is a denial of real social problems in the country. Without solving these problems and without carrying out the necessary reforms, the authorities can expect new large-scale protests. Thirdly, there is a big difference between the rich and the poor. That is, the rich are too rich and the poor are too poor. It was noticeable in society. In addition, new corruption scandals surfaced, which increasingly outraged the population. There was a certain middle

¹³³THE WEALTH REPORT 2021. The global perspective on prime property & investment. 2021 — 15TH EDITION. Knight Frank. Available at: <https://content.knightfrank.com/research/83/documents/en/the-wealth-report-2021-7865.pdf>

¹³⁴Secretive Offshore Maneuvers Enriched Unofficial Third Wife of Kazakhstan Leader Nursultan Nazarbayev. Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project. <https://www.occrp.org/en/the-pandora-papers/secretive-offshore-maneuvers-enriched-unofficial-third-wife-of-kazakhstani-leader-nursultan-nazarbayev>

¹³⁵Kogo spryatat Putin? Raskryvaem «gostajny» [Who has Putin hidden? We reveal "state secrets"] Alexei Navalny. [In Russian] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v_8v816ZdsE

class in the country. However, the majority of the population did not belong to the wealthy middle class.

Concluding remarks.

Residents of Zhanaozen in 2011 demanded better working conditions and higher wages. These protests turned into riots. The demands of the protesters were not heard for several months. The authorities tried to quell the protests and the police opened fire, resulting in injuries and deaths. After the protests in Zhanaozen, relations between the authorities and the population sharply deteriorated. The situation in Zhanaozen created a certain trend of protests, after which the population realized that in case of disagreement, they could protest en masse. In 2016, protests against land reform took place in several regions. The protests initially started in the city of Atyrau but gained support in other regions as well. Thus, after the land protests, a new trend has been established that people's problems are not divided into regions. If one region protests for obvious reasons, then it should receive support from others. In 2019, there were major protests in connection with the renaming of the capital and the results of the presidential elections. Independent organizations underlined the increase in the number of protests in the country. They were mainly political, social, and economic in nature. Foreign and Kazakh analytical portals note the growth of poverty among the population. Thus, before the January protests, there were already high protest moods in Kazakhstan. This was explained in connection with political instability and socio-economic reasons.

On January 2, protests against higher gas prices began in the Mangystau region and quickly spread to other regions. In many regions, the protests were peaceful. However, protesters clashed with police in some cities. There were casualties on both sides. The protests did not stop even after the announcement of a reduction in gas prices. The protesters put forward political and socio-economic demands. A state of emergency has been declared in the country. The President turned to the CSTO for help, citing an external threat to Kazakhstan. However, many experts were skeptical about the president's statement. On January 12, the protests ended and the situation was resolved.

In the city of Almaty, clashes between protesters and police were the most violent. In addition, robberies and other crimes took place during the protests. This is due to the poverty of the population. The lost generation that has been formed in Kazakhstan over the past decades has become uncontrollable in this situation. However, the reaction of the authorities

to the protests was more severe than they tried very hard to suppress the protests in Almaty. The president's decision to open fire without warning was criticized in Kazakhstan and beyond.

Chapter 4. Kazakhstan after the January events.

After the protests, the President in his speech announced the concept of New Kazakhstan. The first subchapter considers the actions of the new government to change the political situation and the opinions of experts about the concept itself. Constitutional amendments in Kazakhstan were considered as well. The subchapter also discusses the new government of Kazakhstan and the revision of Nazarbayev's personality cult. The second subchapter discusses the influence of the Russian Federation on the politics of Kazakhstan. Kazakhstan has remained neutral concerning the Russian invasion of Ukraine. However, even in this situation, the country faces external and internal difficulties. Given the current situation in Kazakhstan, the third chapter offers possible options for political development. Recommendations were given based on experts' opinions and the survey of the thesis.

4.1 New Kazakhstan.

On January 11, President Tokayev issued an official statement on the causes and consequences of the protests. In addition to blaming terrorists who tried to carry out a coup d'état, he outlined a number of important problems. He explained that the tragic events that had taken place were largely caused by serious socio-economic problems and the inefficient policy of some state entities. He mentioned the separation of executive state bodies from the complex realities and needs of citizens. "Representatives of law enforcement agencies have a distorted view of people's lives, their aspirations and requests. The problem of inequality has also become more acute. It is aggravated from year to year, although the average income of the population seems to be growing, at least on paper," he concluded¹³⁶. The President also noted the existence of an oligarchy in the country, that is, a special close circle of people who enjoy all the benefits of the state. In this, he mentioned the ex-president of the Republic of Kazakhstan Nazarbayev, under whom this trend was formed. The National Development Bank of Kazakhstan, the National Wealth Fund "Samruk-Kazyna", as well as "ROP Operator LLP", which is responsible for the disposal fee, were also criticized. According to the President, the activities of these organizations raise many questions and they act for the benefit of a select circle of people. In this regard, he instructed to the creation of a public

¹³⁶ Vystuplenie Glavy gosudarstva K.K. Tokaeva na zasedanii Mazhilisa Parlamenta Respubliki Kazahstan. [Speech by the Head of State K.K. Tokayev at meetings of the Majilis of the Parliament of the Republic of Kazakhstan] January 11, 2022. [In Russian] Available on the official website of Akorda: <https://www.akorda.kz/ru/vystuplenie-glavy-gosudarstva-kk-tokaeva-na-zasedanii-mazhilisa-parlamenta-respubliki-kazahstan-1104414>

social fund "*Qazaqstan Halqyna*" (to the people of Kazakhstan), which will deal with real problems in the field of healthcare, education, and social support.

The most important message since the protests was made by the president on March 16. In this message, he voiced the concept of New Kazakhstan. In general, he raised several issues that needed to be changed or improved. Such as 1) On the powers of the President; 2) Reformatting the representative branch of power; 3) Improvement of the electoral system; 4) Expanding opportunities for the development of the party system; 5) Modernization of the electoral process; 6) Strengthening human rights institutions; 7) Increasing the competitiveness of the media and strengthening the role of civil society institutions; 8) Improvement of the administrative-territorial structure of the country; 9) Decentralization of local government; 10) On priority anti-crisis measures¹³⁷. The President outlined the above changes to avoid political stagnation in the future.

Expert opinion is divided on this matter. For example, Russian political scientist Yekaterina Shulman emphasizes that reforms will benefit Kazakhstan. She claims that Kazakhstan is more close to Europe than Russia nowadays. "It cannot be said that this reform of the state is purely cosmetic, because after January significant changes took place in Kazakhstan, both personal and institutional. Kazakhstan definitely did not go in the direction of tightening the regime. And this will not happen. If there was a movement in the opposite direction, it would be like in Russia in 2012," Shulman concluded¹³⁸. In general, the Kazakh public figure Margulan Seisembay also spoke positively, but with some criticism. He claims that he began to sleep peacefully after the message of the president on March 16, because the message lived up to his expectations. In general, in his opinion, the President is moving in the right direction. However, he criticized Tokayev's order to open fire without warning during protests. Seisembay believes that the president gave the wrong order and did not understand the situation¹³⁹. The European Union also gave positive feedback. Peter Stano, the lead

¹³⁷ State-of-the-Nation Address by President of the Republic of Kazakhstan Kassym-Jomart Tokayev. NEW KAZAKHSTAN: THE PATH OF RENEWAL AND MODERNISATION. March 16, 2022. Available on the official website of Akorda: <https://www.akorda.kz/en/state-of-the-nation-address-by-president-of-the-republic-of-kazakhstan-kassym-jomart-tokayev-17293>

¹³⁸ Bild in Russian. Ekaterina Shul'man i Maksim Kurnikov | Interv'yu BILD [Ekaterina Shulman and Maxim Kurnikov | BILD interview] [In Russian] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LYNfGmb1AzY&ab_channel=BILD%D0%BD%D0%B0%D1%80%D1%83%D1%81%D1%81%D0%BA%D0%BE%D0%BC

¹³⁹ MARGULAN Seisembaj: «V yanvare Tokaeva mogli samogo zastrelit'» – GIPERBOREJ №238. Interv'yu. [MARGULAN Seisembaj: "In January, Tokaev could have been shot himself" - HYPERBOREA #238. Interview] Channel GIPERBOREJ. [In Russian] Available at:

spokesperson for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, said the EU welcomes the political reforms initiated by President Tokayev after the tragic January events. He also positively noted the importance of socio-economic reforms. Stano urged Kazakhstan to fully implement the OSCE/ODIHR recommendations¹⁴⁰. Andris Ameriks, First Vice President of the European Parliament Delegation for Cooperation with the Countries of Central Asia and Mongolia, highly appreciated the changes in Kazakhstan. “It was very important for us to hear President Tokayev's statement about the very serious reforms that will take place in Kazakhstan. This is definitely a step towards democracy,” said Ameriks. At the same time, he called on Kazakhstan to conduct a transparent and concrete investigation into the January events¹⁴¹. But not everyone took Tokayev's concept positively. Human Rights Watch criticized the President of Kazakhstan and called for an investigation into the killings and human rights violations. The organization claims that the president promoted the concept of New Kazakhstan in his political speech. However, he was confused regarding the human rights violations during the protests and the violence in January. The organization demanded the creation of an independent hybrid body with the participation of national and international experts to investigate all crimes¹⁴².

During the survey, respondents were asked about the concept of New Kazakhstan. Question: How do you feel about the concept of "New Kazakhstan" in the message of President Tokayev? 39.5% (49 responses) of participants have a positive attitude towards it and believe that the President is taking steps to implement it. There are those who do not believe in the president's reforms and think that this will not change anything in the country. Their share is 16.9% (21 responses). The main part, 53.2% (66 responses) of participants, believes that in addition to the concept of New Kazakhstan, the country needs political, economic and legal reforms¹⁴³. The results show that society is ready for change. Since the percentage of negatively minded has the smallest ratio. However, the percentage of those who believe in the concept and its implementation, although higher than those who do not believe

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mFzC0IykVLU&ab_channel=%D0%93%D0%98%D0%9F%D0%95%D0%A0%D0%91%D0%9E%D0%A0%D0%95%D0%99

¹⁴⁰ Kazakhstan: Statement by the Spokesperson on the Constitutional Referendum. EEAS Press Team. June 7, 2022. https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/kazakhstan-statement-spokesperson-constitutional-referendum_en?s=222

¹⁴¹ Aibarshyn Akhmetkali. MEP Says Kazakh President's Reforms Important Step Towards Building Democracy. The Astana Times. April 14, 2022. <https://astanatimes.com/2022/04/mep-says-kazakh-presidents-reforms-important-step-towards-building-democracy/>

¹⁴² 'New Kazakhstan' Needs Independent Inquiry on January Events. Human Rights Watch. March 18, 2022. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/03/18/new-kazakhstan-needs-independent-inquiry-january-events>

¹⁴³ See the survey results, question 9.

in the concept, is not an overwhelming majority. Most believe that the concept of "New Kazakhstan" alone is not enough and additional reforms are needed. Here, the demands of the protesters can be noted. During the protests, they demanded a complete change of power. The data comes from this factor. According to the majority, only full-fledged reforms will change the situation in the country. Summing up this issue, the majority is generally not opposed to the reforms proposed by the president. However, the society is still wary of such promises.

4.1.1 Constitutional reforms.

On June 5, 2022, the Republican referendum was held in Kazakhstan. The draft law “On amendments and additions to the Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan” was submitted to the referendum with the following wording of the question in the ballot: “Do you accept the amendments and additions to the Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan set out in the draft Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan “On amendments and additions to the Constitution Republic of Kazakhstan”, published in the media on May 6, 2022”. According to the official information of the Central Election Commission, 7,985,769 people took part in the referendum, that is, 68.05 percent of the citizens of the Republic of Kazakhstan who have the right to participate in the referendum. 6,163,516 citizens voted in favor of the proposed changes against 1,490,470¹⁴⁴. Thus, the changes were adopted by an overwhelming majority.

As a result, several articles of the Constitution were amended. The main changes were the abolition of the death penalty, the restoration of the constitutional court, and the creation of the Supreme Accounts Chamber. Changes in the Constitution also affected the president. The provision that the same person cannot be elected president of Kazakhstan more than twice in a row has been removed from the Constitution. Now, the President can be elected for only one term. For the period of exercising his powers, the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan cannot be a member of a political party, and his close relatives are not entitled to hold positions of political civil servants, or heads of subjects of the quasi-public sector. Also, the President does not have the right to cancel the decisions of akims of regions, cities of republican significance and the capital. The President, instead of the 15 deputies of the Senate that were previously, now appoints only 10. The Parliament of Kazakhstan, at the proposal of the President, can make changes and additions to the Constitution. Parliament has the right to

¹⁴⁴Information on the results of the republican referendum. Central Election Commission of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Press release from June 8, 2022. <https://www.election.gov.kz/eng/news/releases/index.php?ID=7157>

make constitutional laws and disagree with the president. If any constitutional laws passed by deputies are objected to by the president, parliament must re-discuss the law within a month¹⁴⁵. Subparagraphs relating to Nazarbayev were also removed. Such references as "Elbasy" and "First President" are no longer in the Constitution.

The aforementioned constitutional amendments are indeed the most democratic among the previous amendments. Kazakhstan was indeed a super-presidential republic. After the changes, the country seems more democratic than before. However, there are some points worth paying attention to. The president still appoints the government, the head of the Central Electoral Commission, the chairman of the Constitutional Court, the heads of all structures and nominates the speaker of the Senate. Only the chairman of the lower house of parliament is nominated and elected by the deputies. Therefore, it is wrong to firmly assert that the presidential power in Kazakhstan has weakened. Along with this, in September 2022, two more amendments were made at the proposal of the President. By the decree of the President, the capital of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the city of Nur-Sultan, was again renamed Astana. At the same time, the presidential term was extended to 7 years¹⁴⁶. These amendments caused ambiguous feelings in Kazakh society. On the one hand, the citizens welcomed the renaming of the capital. On the other hand, presidential terms were extended, and 7 years were too much. But the fact that all these amendments were made on the eve of the upcoming presidential elections made it clear. Most likely, the renaming of the capital before the elections was done to create a positive mood in society and win votes. In 2019, after the resignation of Nazarbayev, it was Tokayev who proposed renaming the capital in honor of the first president. Then, despite the protests, the capital was renamed. The extension of presidential terms is a strengthening of the presidential power, which Tokayev promised to weaken.

As for strengthening power, Nazarbayev's "Kazakhstan-2030" policy also seemed very promising at first. The strategy, announced in 1997, was called "Kazakhstan-2030: prosperity,

¹⁴⁵ Qazaqstan Respýblikasynyń Konstıtýsiasyna ózgerister men tolyqtyrýlar engizý týraly. [On amendments and additions to the Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan] Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated June 8, 2022, adopted at the republican referendum on June 5, 2022. [In Kazakh] <http://zan.gov.kz/client/#!/doc/168832/kaz>

¹⁴⁶ The official website of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Qazaqstan Respýblikasynyń elordasy – Nur-Sultan qalasynyń ataýyn Qazaqstan Respýblikasynyń elordasy – Astana qalasy dep ózgertý týraly [About renaming the capital of the Republic of Kazakhstan -the city of NurSultan to the capital of the Republic of Kazakhstan - the city of Astana] September 17, 2022. [In Kazakh] <https://akorda.kz/kz/kazakstan-respublikasynyn-elordasy-nur-sultan-kalasyyn-atauyn-kazakstan-respublikasynyn-elordasy-astana-kalasy-dep-ozgertu-turaly-1782825>

security and well-being of the citizens of Kazakhstan." The strategy covered almost everything, including economic growth, democracy, social justice, equality, the rule of law, healthcare, stability, and others¹⁴⁷. At first, it seemed that everything was going according to strategy. Kazakhstan has been accepted into many international organizations. Good diplomatic relations have been established with many countries. In 1997, the capital was moved from Almaty to Akmola. But since the 2000s, Nazarbayev's rise to power has become more visible. Opposition associations in Kazakhstan were severely suppressed. There was the persecution of journalists and restrictions on freedom of speech. Unfortunately, the strategy ended with the establishment of an authoritarian regime and, for the most part, a failure in these areas. It is too early to talk about the similarity of Tokaev's "New Kazakhstan" with Nazarbayev's strategy. However, along with promises and some positively perceived changes, the strengthening of presidential power followed.

During the survey, respondents were asked about the main result of the January events. The main result is the involvement of the population in political processes by 28.2% (35 responses) of participants. 34.7% (43 responses) consider the resignation of the government headed by A. Mamin and the dismissal of the First President from the post of chairman of the Security Council to be the most important. The largest part of the respondents, that is, 47.6% (59 responses) of the participants, believe that the results expected by the people were not achieved.

4.1.2 The new “Old team”.

After the January protests in Kazakhstan, some politicians and businessmen began to be detained. Chairman of the National Security Committee Karim Massimov was taken into custody on charges of high treason. Nazarbayev's nephew Kairat Satybaldy was arrested on charges of embezzlement and abuse of office, while his wife was detained on suspicion of illegally taking over a business. Billionaire Kairat Boranbaev, whose daughter was married to Dariga Nazarbayeva's son Aisultan, was arrested for two months on the fact of embezzlement on an especially large scale. And some simply vacated their posts. Nazarbayev's son-in-law headed the Atameken National Chamber of Entrepreneurs for eight years. On January 17, he voluntarily left his post. Another nephew of Nazarbayev, Samat Abish, who served as the first

¹⁴⁷ Qazaqstan - 2030 Barlyq Qazaqstandyqtardyń ósip-órkendeyi, qayıpsızdigi jáne ál-aýqatynyń artýy. [Kazakhstan-2030: prosperity, security and well-being of the citizens of Kazakhstan]. Message of the President of the country to the people of Kazakhstan in 1997. [In Kazakh] <https://adilet.zan.kz/rus/docs/K970002030>

deputy chairman of the National Security Committee, was "released from his post." Dariga Nazarbayeva, who was a member of the Mazhilis, resigned. The father-in-law of the grandson of Nursultan Nazarbayev, Berik Imashev, has served as chairman of the Central Election Commission since 2016. In January 2022, he was relieved of this position. Two sons-in-law of Nazarbayev have been removed from senior positions in two large energy companies: the head of KazakGaz, Kairat Sharipbayev, who is called the husband of the eldest daughter of ex-president Dariga, and the chairman of the board of KazTransOil, Dimash Dosanov, who is married to the youngest daughter of the first president, Aliya Nazarbayeva¹⁴⁸.

All of the above persons are united by a family or close trust relationship with the ex-president Nursultan Nazarbayev. "Tokayev has moved to curb the political and economic muscle of the Nazarbayev family since the January violence," say experts¹⁴⁹. One can partially agree with this, given that references to Nazarbayev were removed from the Constitution. In addition, those close to the ex-president lost certain privileges. It cannot be firmly stated that Tokayev has fully begun to fight Nazarbayev's team. According to political scientist Satpayev, Tokayev has not yet touched on the most important ones. Satpayev claims that Tokayev is trying not to burn all the bridges with a significant part of the political and business elite. Because 90 percent of the current elite are from the Nazarbayev system. The president himself came out of this system. According to the political scientist, Tokayev is trying to gain the loyalty of the state apparatus. "Please note that now Tokayev is hitting the edge of the pie called "the family of the first president" and hitting key figures so far. It all depends on what is included in the package of security guarantees for Nazarbayev. Will these guarantees apply only to the first president and his close relatives, or does this package include only Nazarbayev and not all other relatives? We do not yet know all the nuances of this informal agreement." Satpaev concluded¹⁵⁰. The above words of Satpaev correspond to the truth. At the moment, no charges have been filed against members of the Nazarbayev family. They just vacated their positions and do not interfere with the country's politics.

¹⁴⁸ Tatiana Torochoeshnikova, Daniil Sotnikov. Zachistka Tokaeva: kto prishel na smenu klanu Nazarbaeva vo vlasti i mozno li ih nazvat' komandoj prezidenta [Tokayev 's sweep: who replaced Nazarbayev's clan in power and can they be called the president's team] TvRain.ru. January 20,2022. [In Russian] https://tvrain.ru/teleshov/notes/ljudi_tokaeva-545941/

¹⁴⁹ Joanna Lillis. Kazakhstan: Net tightens around Nazarbayev clan as nephew arrested. Eurasianet. March 13, 2022. <https://eurasianet.org/kazakhstan-net-tightens-around-nazarbayev-clan-as-nephew-arrested>

¹⁵⁰ Petr Trotsenko. «Tokaev poka ne trogaet samyh glavnyh». Dosym Satpaev ob arestah rodstvennikov Nazarbaeva i o tekh, kto ishchet sebe «novogo hozyaina» ["Tokayev does not touch the most important ones yet." Dosym Satpayev on the arrests of Nazarbayev's relatives and those who are looking for a "new owner"] Azattyq RFE/RL. May 2, 2022. [In Russian] <https://rus.azattyq.org/a/kazakhstan-political-scientist-on-the-arrests-of-nazarbayevs-relatives/31829125.html>

Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that there is some kind of informal agreement on Nazarbayev's security guarantees. Here it is necessary to take into account the very fact of Tokayev's coming to power. After Nazarbayev's resignation, he became acting president. Following the results of the 2019 elections, which were accompanied by protests and violations, he became president. At that time, Nazarbayev was the chairman of the Security Council, which had a very strong influence on the politics of the state. For this reason, Tokayev needed to demonstrate the strengthening of his power.

One of the survey questions was related to the appointment of a new government in January. The question was this: are you satisfied with the Government that was appointed after the January events? 41.1% (51 responses) of participants are satisfied with the new government and believe that Kazakhstanis should devote time to the new team. 42.7% (53 responses) of respondents are dissatisfied with the newly elected politicians because the former persons came to power. According to them, there are no new representatives. 23.4% (29 responses) are skeptical about the new government, as they believe that the newly appointed one is politically dependent¹⁵¹. As can be seen from the survey results, respondents were divided into pros and cons regarding the new government. And the smallest part treats them with doubt. That is, there is no clear overwhelming opinion.

Given the composition of the newly appointed government, one can understand the results of the survey and the opinions of experts. On January 11, 2022, a new government headed by Alikhan Smailov was approved. Including the prime minister himself, his deputies and ministers, 21 politicians were appointed. The new Cabinet of Ministers included only 7 new ministers, including one woman - Health Minister Azhar Giniyat. Of these, only four had never been ministers before¹⁵². As for Alikhan Smailov, he began his political career in the 1990s and is not a new person in the state system of government. In various years, he was the Chairman of the Statistics Agency of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Minister of Finance of the Republic of Kazakhstan. As for other important posts that have been vacated, in this situation, it is difficult to talk about new representatives in Tokayev's team. The new chairman of the Central Election Commission was Nurlan Abdirrov, who in different years was a deputy of the Mazhilis and the Senate. Maulen Ashimbaev, a former assistant to the President of the

¹⁵¹ See the survey results, question 5.

¹⁵² Sputnik News Network Agency. Pravitel'stvo Kazakhstana - novyj sostav [Government of Kazakhstan - new composition] January 11, 2022. Updated February 1, 2022. [In Russian] <https://ru.sputnik.kz/20220111/pravitelstvo-kazakhstana-novyy-sostav-19119557.html>

Republic of Kazakhstan, deputy of the Majilis, became the Chairman of the Senate. A former head of the presidential administration of Kazakhstan Yerlan Koshanov became chairman of the Mazhilis.

4.2 The Russian factor.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, relations between Kazakhstan and Russia were established with the signing in May 1992 of the Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance. After the agreement, the relationship between the countries only strengthened. Today, countries are members of such important organizations as the Collective Security Treaty Organization, the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). The countries basically support each other in the international arena and have quite friendly relations. Economically, Kazakhstan is dependent on Russian imports. At the end of 2021, trade between the countries reached a record high of \$24.2 billion¹⁵³. According to the Association of Financiers of Kazakhstan, in the structure of Kazakhstan's imports for 4 months (January-April 2022) at the moment, the share of the Russian Federation is 38.5%, the share of the EU countries and the USA is 16.4%. The share of Asian countries (China, Korea, and Japan) increased from 23.2% to 27.3%. It should be noted that the share of Russia decreased from 41%. Breaks in logistics supply chains in Kazakhstan from Western countries have led to an increase in imports from Russia of consumer goods, chemical products, and mineral products¹⁵⁴. Even if Russian imports are declining, they still remain the largest.

Since 2014, relations between official countries have been good, but there is tension in society due to the annexation of Crimea and the situation in Donbas. Given the Russian-speaking population of Kazakhstan in the northern regions, the Crimean scenario was quite possible in the event of a deterioration in relations with Russia. Author Samantha Brletich believes that cooperation with Kazakhstan is economically and politically beneficial for Russia, and it is able to control everything through regional organizations like CSTO and

¹⁵³ Press service of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Kazakhstan. "Taking into account mutual interests." Discussions between Alikhan Smailov and Mikhail Mishustin in Cholpon-Ata. August 25, 2022. <https://primeminister.kz/en/news/taking-into-account-mutual-interests-discussions-between-alikhan-smailov-and-mikhail-mishustin-in-cholpon-ata-317515>

¹⁵⁴ Association of Financiers of Kazakhstan. S yanvarya po aprel' dolya Rossii v importe Kazahstana snizilas' do 39%, Azii — vyroslo do 27% [From January to April, the share of Russia in Kazakhstan's imports decreased to 39%, Asia — increased to 27%] June 30, 2022. [In Russian] <https://afk.kz/ru/analytics/prochie-analiticheskie-materialyi/tovarooborot-rk-rf.html>

EAEU. Even if the northern regions of Kazakhstan are annexed, it is still unclear whether the local population will recognize Russia as legitimate power. On this occasion, Brletich refers to the fact that the Russians of Kazakhstan do not face discrimination, and past Russian separatist movements were resolved due to the policy of tolerance and inclusiveness in Kazakhstan. The author believes that under Russian rule, the political, social, and economic situation of Russians in Kazakhstan will not improve. Since Russia is suffering socially, Kazakhstan will provide its citizens, including Russians, with resources much faster than Russia¹⁵⁵.

Here it is worth noting the statement of Russian politicians about Kazakhstan and the influence of Russian propaganda. Public outcry in Kazakhstan was caused by the statements of some politicians and public figures. Back in 2020, two State Duma deputies Vyacheslav Nikonov and Evgeny Fedorov called the territory of Kazakhstan a great gift “from Russia and the USSR. “Russia must demand, since you don’t recognize it as a gift, then give it back. It was taken illegally. Because in 1990 a law was adopted, written in detail, which Kazakhstan voted for, the constitutional law of the Soviet Union,” Fedorov said. The editor-in-chief of Russia Today, Margarita Simonyan, made demands to Kazakhstan. "Crimea - to recognize. Cyrillic - return. Russian is the second state language, as in Kyrgyzstan. Leave the Russian schools alone and don't lie to your boss (referring to Russia) that this is so. Drive out anti-Russian NGOs. A coherent fraternal domestic policy that excludes games with the Nazis (referring to Ukrainians)" she said¹⁵⁶. Such statements are often heard in Russian talk shows. In connection with Nikonov's statement, a Charge d'Affaires of the Russian Federation was invited to the Foreign Ministry. Kazakhstan expressed bewilderment at Nikonov's statement, noting that it would harm friendly relations between the countries¹⁵⁷. Russians in Kazakhstan also reacted to such statements. They have expressed their dissatisfaction on social media with "fake news" about Kazakh persecution appearing in the Russian media. Alexandra Myskina, a journalist from Almaty, launched an online flash mob in Kazakh national dress, demonstrating that Russians are not oppressed in Kazakhstan. Myskina's idea quickly gained

¹⁵⁵ BRLETICH, S. (2015). THE CRIMEA MODEL: WILL RUSSIA ANNEX THE NORTHERN REGION OF KAZAKHSTAN? *Geopolitics, History, and International Relations*, 7(1), 11–29. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26805275>

¹⁵⁶ Il'ya Mastuykov. «Smeshnaya nezavisimost'» Chto rossijskie deputaty i propagandisty govoryat o krizise v Kazahstane ["Ridiculous independence" What Russian MPs and propagandists say about the crisis in Kazakhstan] *Novaya Gazeta*. January 8, 2022. [In Russian] <https://novyagazeta.ru/articles/2022/01/08/smeshnaia-nezavisimost>

¹⁵⁷ Press center of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan. About the meeting in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan. December 12, 2022. <https://www.gov.kz/memleket/entities/mfa/press/news/details/135316?lang=en>

popularity and support. Many ethnic Russians began to post their photos in Kazakh national clothes and with national food¹⁵⁸.

Currently, the political agenda of the Russian government regarding the Russian invasion of Ukraine is actively promoted by Russian propaganda. The International Center for Journalism MediaNet conducted a survey on the influence of Russian media in Kazakhstan. In their opinion, a significant part of Kazakhstanis is influenced by Russian propaganda. 1,100 citizens were polled, and 36% of them are convinced that a “Russian military operation against the Nazis” is now underway in Ukraine. Only 13% perceive it as "a war between Russia and Ukraine with the aim of its further annexation. Among the Kazakh-speaking respondents, the option “I support Ukraine” was chosen by 20%, and among the Russian-speaking respondents, three times less – 6%. The authors believe that in the perception of Kazakhstanis, the aggressive narratives of the Russian media more confidently form the information field than the less distinct rhetoric of Akorda and the official Kazakh media. They call on the government to increase the level of media literacy of citizens, including in the field of the ability to deconstruct propaganda, resist misinformation and fakes¹⁵⁹. However, the situation is not as clear as it seems from MediaNet’s survey results. For example, on March 6, a rally in support of Ukraine was held in the city of Almaty. Up to 5,000 people took part in the rally. The rally participants held Ukrainian flags in their hands and shouted anti-Russian slogans. Also, Kazakhstanis advocated Kazakhstan's withdrawal from the CIS, the CSTO, and the EAEU¹⁶⁰. Since February 25, the Humanitarian Support Headquarters of Ukraine in Kazakhstan has been continuously assisting in the organization and delivery of humanitarian aid received from Kazakhstanis. Organization and delivery of humanitarian aid by volunteers is carried out through the Embassy of Ukraine in Kazakhstan. In total, there are already 11

¹⁵⁸ Kanat Altynbayev. Russkie v Kazahstane govoryat Moskve, chto ih ne nuzhno «spasat'» [Russians in Kazakhstan tell Moscow they don't need to be "rescued"] Karavansarai. March 3, 2022. [In Russian] https://central.asia-news.com/ru/articles/cnmi_ca/features/2022/03/22/feature-01

¹⁵⁹ The Bureau for Express Monitoring of Public Opinion DEMOSCOPE under the International Center for Journalism MediaNet. Saýalnama: Qazaqstandyqtardyń basym bóligi Resei propagandasynyń jetegine erip barady [Survey: the majority of Kazakhstanis follow the drive of Russian propaganda] [In Kazakh] <https://demos.kz/saualnama-aza-standy-tardy-basym-b-ligi-resej-propagandasyny-zhetegine-erip-barady/?lang=kz>

¹⁶⁰ Petr Trotseko. «Orys shal, ket!» Kak almatincy Ukrainu podderzhali. Reportazh s voskresnogo mitinga. ["Get Out Russian old man" As Almaty residents supported Ukraine. Report from Sunday's rally] Azattyq RFE/RL. March 6, 2022. [In Russian] <https://rus.azattyq.org/a/kazakhstan-almaty-ukraine-antiwar-rally-reportage-2022-03-06/31738835.html>

collection points for humanitarian aid in different regions in the Republic of Kazakhstan. In April, they sent 200 tons of humanitarian aid¹⁶¹.

Summing up the attitude of Kazakhstanis to the war in Ukraine, it is clear that there are those who are against and for it. As long as Kazakhstan tries to remain neutral, the official media cannot take a stand. On the one hand, criticism of Russia can put the country in danger; on the other hand, if Kazakhstan supports Russia, the country may remain under sanctions, like Belarus. For some citizens, it is not enough just to be neutral without explanation. In this regard, someone gets information from the Russian media and others from the Western. Therefore, there are citizens in the country who, according to statistics, support Russia, and at the same time there are rallies and humanitarian aid in support of Ukraine. But it was not possible to maintain a completely neutral position for a long time. On June 17, at the plenary session of the 25th St. Petersburg International Economic Forum, the President of Kazakhstan, in the presence of Vladimir Putin, called the Donetsk People's Republic and Luhansk People's Republic "quasi-state territories." He made it clear that Kazakhstan does not recognize their independence and also called the war in Ukraine "a war", while in Russia it is called "a special military operation"¹⁶². Also on June 15, Tokayev said that Kazakhstan would not help Russia bypass Western sanctions, as there was a threat that Kazakhstan itself could fall under the second wave of Western sanctions¹⁶³. In September 2022, the largest bank in Kazakhstan, Halyk Bank (People's Bank), blocked the Russian payment system Mir amid warnings from the US Treasury about possible sanctions. The sanctions apply to organizations that support the Russian payment system outside of it¹⁶⁴.

Another factor that influenced society was the partial military mobilization announced in Russia. After the announcement of mobilization, Russians massively migrated to all open visa-free countries, including Kazakhstan. The Kazakh-Russian border is the longest continuous international border. Long queues formed at all checkpoints on the border. People's opinion is also divided on this matter. Some expressed compassion and

¹⁶¹ Vladislav Son. Shtab gumanitarnoj podderzhki Ukrainy: volonterstvo, kotoroe otkryvaet novye grani [Humanitarian Support Headquarters of Ukraine: volunteering, which opens up new facets] Elitar Information analytical portal. April 22, 2022. [In Russian] <https://elitar.kz/ru/materialy/politika/shtab-gumanitarnoy-podderzhki-ukrainy-volonterstvo-kotoroye-otkryvayet-novyie-grani>

¹⁶² Ekaterina Venkina. Kazahstan ne priznaet "kvazigosudarstvennyye" "DNR" i "LNR" [Kazakhstan does not recognize the "quasi-state" "DPR" and "LPR"] DW. June 17, 2022. [In Russian] <https://www.dw.com/ru/kazahstan-ne-sobiraetsja-priznavat-kvazigosudarstvennyye-dnr-i-lnr/a-62175405>

¹⁶³ RFE/RL's Russian Service. Kazakh President Vows Not To Violate Sanctions Against Russia. June 15, 2022. <https://www.rferl.org/a/kazahstan-toqaev-sanctions-russia/31899734.html>

¹⁶⁴ RFE/RL's Russian Service. Kazakhstan's Largest Bank Suspends Russia's Mir Payment System. September 21, 2022. <https://www.rferl.org/a/kazahstan-bank-suspends-russia-mir-payment-system/32044430.html>

understanding, while others actively criticize the Russian migration. Journalists interviewed some of them about this. For example, one of the respondents believes that the newcomers are not fleeing from the war, but from the mobilization, saving their lives. “From the very beginning, I was in favor of closing the borders. Now we have ‘Z patriots’ coming to us, who will then demand service in Russian and payment in rubles, because, you see, ‘Kazakhstan is just renting land from Russia’,” she summed up¹⁶⁵. This was followed by the demand of local residents to close the borders with Russia. Activists launched an online appeal to the President of the country, which quickly gained popularity in the country. In their opinion, the massive migration of Russians threatens the national security and social stability of the country¹⁶⁶.

Rallies in support of Ukraine, anti-Russian slogans, and demands to close the border confirm that the attitude of Kazakhstanis towards Russia is gradually changing. Kazakh sociologist Serik Beisembaev argues that after Russia's invasion of Ukraine, anti-Russian sentiments began to strengthen in society. At the same time, this does not apply to the entire country, but only to its politicized part. The sociologist claims that the possible partnership of the Russian Sberbank with the government, as well as the possible construction of a nuclear power plant, caused an extremely negative reaction in society. “This suggests that the division of our society is growing. Russia ceases to be a hegemon... These trends will continue to grow,” he concluded. The sociologist also added that there is no interethnic conflict since Russians from Russia and Kazakhstan are not the same¹⁶⁷. If there are anti-Russian sentiments in society, then why immediately pursue a completely independent policy and get rid of the influence of the Kremlin? Here it is necessary to note the economic and political influence of Russia on Kazakhstan, as well as the introduction of CSTO troops in January 2022. Political scientist Viktor Kovtunovsky believes that Nazarbayev resigned in 2019 under pressure from the Kremlin. Since Nazarbaev was elderly, the Kremlin feared that in the event of Nazarbaev's sudden death in Kazakhstan, there would be a Maidan in Kazakhstan as in Ukraine, and a

¹⁶⁵ Idel.Realii media project of the Tatar-Bashkir service of RFE/RL. *Rossiyanе begut ot mobilizacii v Central'nyu Aziyu. Chto ob etom dumayut mestnye zhiteli?* [Russians are fleeing from mobilization to Central Asia. What do the locals think about this?]. September 26, 2022. [In Russian] <https://www.idelreal.org/a/32051332.html>

¹⁶⁶ Marina Maratova. *Kazahstancy prosyat Tokaeva zakryt' granicu s Rossiej* [Kazakhstanis ask Tokayev to close the border with Russia] Ulys Media. September 28, 2022. [In Russian] <https://ulysmedia.kz/news/13235-kazahstantsy-prosiat-tokaeva-zagryt-granitsu-s-rossiei/>

¹⁶⁷ Batyrkhan Togaibayev. *Sociolog: Vojna v Ukraine uskorila process samoopredeleniya v Kazahstane* [Sociologist: The war in Ukraine has accelerated the process of self-determination in Kazakhstan] Forbes Kazakhstan. September 2, 2022. [In Russian] https://forbes.kz/massmedia/sotsiolog_vojna_v_ukraine_uskorila_protseess_samoopredeleniya_v_kazahstane/

person who would not suit Moscow would come to power. The political scientist believes that thanks to Moscow's intervention President Tokayev was able to stay in power¹⁶⁸.

Ukraine's political experience from the Orange Revolution to the Russian invasion has shown that worsening relations with Russia can lead to unexpected consequences. But the war itself in Ukraine accelerated the process of Kazakhstan's alienation from Russia. Today, Kazakhstan is a member of the CSTO and the EAEU, and cooperation in these organizations is more beneficial for Russia than for Kazakhstan. Participation in these organizations often drags Kazakhstan to the bottom, since every time Kazakhstan risks being under Western sanctions. The agreements of both organizations provide for withdrawal from the organization. However, the question is, how will Russia react to this? It is also important for the Russian leadership to preserve for Kazakhstan, as a border state, the role of an eastern and, most importantly, pro-Russian buffer-zone with not very calm Central Asia and Afghanistan, where, according to Russia, military bases of third countries should not appear in the future. If there is an attempt to withdraw from these organizations, then, most likely, Russia will consider Kazakhstan as a "hostile regime."¹⁶⁹

During the survey, participants were asked questions about further cooperation with the Russian Federation and its political influence on Kazakhstan. 66.1% of respondents believe that, given the geopolitical situation in the world in the future, we must get out of the influence of Russia and protect our national interests. 21% were in favor of cooperation since Russia is a neighbor and a close partner. 18.5% believe that Kazakhstan is not ready to get out of Russia's influence¹⁷⁰. As you can see, the majority have a negative attitude towards the influence of the Russian Federation, which once again confirms the recently growing anti-Russian sentiment. But there are those who prefer cooperation with Russia or consider its influence too strong. The results of the thesis survey differ from the results of the survey from MediaNet. Most likely, this is due to the timing of the survey. The MediaNet survey was conducted in the second month of the war in Ukraine, while the survey for this thesis was

¹⁶⁸ Elnur Alimova. Est' li u Tokaeva svoj klan, kakie garantii poluchil Nazarbaev i chto budet dal'she? Interv'yu s politologom [Does Tokayev have his own clan, what guarantees did Nazarbayev receive and what will happen next? Interview with a political scientist] Radio Azattyq RFE/RL. [In Russian] <https://rus.azattyq.org/a/31672513.html>

¹⁶⁹ Dosym Satpayev. Kak Kazahstan stal zalozhnikom geopoliticheskoy igry Rossii protiv Ukrainy [How Kazakhstan became a hostage of Russia's geopolitical game against Ukraine] Forbes Kazakhstan. February 24, 2022. [In Russian] https://forbes.kz/process/expertise/dosyim_satpaev_oboznachil_riski_dlya_kazahstana_v_rossiysko-ukrainskom_konflikte/

¹⁷⁰ See the survey results, question 6.

conducted in the sixth month. By the sixth month, many had already formed an opinion about the war. In addition, there were speeches by the president who did not support the war. The survey results clearly show that the war in Ukraine has become an example for Kazakhstanis, and they are already wary of Russia, not preferring further deep cooperation with it.

Since gaining independence, Kazakhstan has become dependent on Russia politically and economically. However, it always has its own policy of neutrality and tolerance. A change of political course or a real change of power is clearly unacceptable for Kremlin. During the January events, Moscow demonstrated its interest in maintaining the current government in Kazakhstan. Most likely, in case of another mass protest, Russia will do the same. However, because of the war in Ukraine and the mass migration of Russians to Kazakhstan, anti-Russian sentiments are growing in the country. If the war in Ukraine continues for a long time, then most likely it will intensify. Even if Russia intervenes directly or indirectly, society will no longer take it as before. But the broadcasting of Russian channels and anti-Kazakh statements by Russian politicians create an imbalance in society. Comparing Russian propaganda and anti-Russian sentiment, it can be concluded that there is a split in society on this issue. However, the government of Kazakhstan itself begins to understand that in such cooperation with Russia, Kazakhstan is losing its image. Most likely, this is why Kazakhstan does not recognize the LPR and DPR and calls them “quasi-state territories”. Taking into account recent political events, it can be assumed that at the moment the Russian factor is dangerous for Kazakhstan. If the Ak Orda, for its economic and political purposes, becomes more independent of the Kremlin and tries to withdraw from the CSTO and the EAEU, then Russia will perceive this as a threat. If sooner or later Kazakhstan has to do this, then the country's leadership must be sure that there is no split in society and that Kazakhstan will be guaranteed support and security. As of today, Kazakhstan has only officially recognized borders and treaties on security guarantees in exchange for the renunciation of nuclear weapons. However, the example of Crimea and Donbas proved that agreements fade into second place when it comes to Russia's interests

4.3 Future development.

2022 has been full of changes for Kazakhstan. The January events and their consequences have changed the relationship between society and the government. In addition to the January protests, there is a war in Ukraine and massive immigration of Russians to Kazakhstan. In this

regard, the state faces the task of preventing new protests and maintaining stability in the current circumstances.

The last question of the questionnaire concerned the future prospects of Kazakhstan. Questionnaire: What, in your opinion, should be the next steps for the development of the country? Unlike other questions, there are no options here. Respondents had only to write their full opinion on this issue. Of the 124 participants, 104 gave their full personal opinion, pointing out several suggestions and demands, while the remaining 20 chose not to answer. The responses of the participants were grouped according to the similarity of the proposed changes and requirements. The answers of respondents were related to different issues¹⁷¹. The main issue mentioned more than others was corruption. Participants believe that it's the main problem in the country. First of all, they highlight corruption in the state bodies and among governmental workers. Plus, corruption among citizens still remains a problem. Mainly, participants don't see the "New Kazakhstan" without solving this problem. The next group of answers was related to the social life of the citizens and their well-being. Participants often mentioned poor infrastructure, low wages, unemployment, high food prices, and others. The next group of responses was more like a demand than an opinion. There are people who believe that only a complete change of power and the involvement of the younger generation in governance should be the next step for the country. In this case, the participants' responses were a bit aggressive, claiming that the current government is incapable of solving the real problems of the country. There is another similar opinion of the participants, who demand greater accountability of the authorities to the population. However, there is a group of participants that constitutes a minority that believes in President Tokayev. There are general answers to improve the situation in the country as a whole. Participants offered different ideas about this. For example, some claimed to have appointed real professionals and emphasized education, medicine and science. Others suggested strengthening social cohesion by calling for honest relations among citizens. Some believe that the problem lies in the influence of the Russian Federation, which must be reduced. Also, there are individual answers, such as withdrawal from the CSTO and the EAEU, an increase in national production, strengthening the status of the Kazakh language, strengthening the army, and others.

Summing up the results of the survey responses, several main requirements of the respondents can be identified. First of all, the political reforms that will change the policy of

¹⁷¹ See the survey results, question 10.

the state and make it more democratic. Political reforms should first of all eliminate corruption in the country. Also, in connection with the demands for a change of power and the demand for accountability, wariness and distrust are visible. The second is economic reforms aimed at improving the lives of citizens. These reforms should develop education, science, medicine and involve real professionals in their field. The third one is to maintain stability and development. In the current geopolitical conditions, the constitutional integrity of the country is very important. There is a certain group of people who see a threat in cooperation with Russia. These measures should unite society and create trusting relationships.

In the current geopolitical conditions, most likely maintaining a balance without harming yourself is the most correct decision. After the January events, the people became more demanding from the government. In the current geopolitical conditions, most likely, maintaining a balance without harming oneself is the most correct decision. After the January events, people became more demanding of the authorities. Experts say that after the January events, Kazakhstanis have become more interested in politics. "69% of young people believe that young people should have more prospects for self-expression in political life, 59% believe that politics in Kazakhstan does not take into account the political views of young people, their needs and interests, does not meet them. Therefore, interest in politics is growing, the intention is growing, but the practice of participation remains at a low level," said Irina Mednikova, chairman of the Youth Information Service of Kazakhstan¹⁷². Given the growing interest of citizens in politics and a certain level of distrust among young people, it can be predicted that President Tokayev will not have 30 years in the post of Nazarbayev. If there are no proper political reforms, this trend will intensify. The government will introduce new policies and changes through the national media, but if this does not improve people's lives, protests will grow. In this regard, the time of the Tokayev government is running out.

In addition, the situation was aggravated by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the sanctions of Western countries, and the mass immigration of Russians due to military mobilization. First of all, this is a blow to the economy. Kazakh economist Almas Chukin believes that the EAEU is living its last days. According to him, the three "hostile diseases" of the EAEU are a decision-making mechanism; fragmentation of revenues from the collection of customs

¹⁷²PaperLab. Politicheskoe uchastie molodezhi v Kazahstane: rol' cifrovyyh tekhnologij [Political participation of young people in Kazakhstan: the role of digital technologies] PaperLab Discussion Platform from July 28, 2022. [In Russian] <https://paperlab.kz/politicheskoe-uchastie-molodezhi-rol-cifrovyyh-tekhnologij>

duties; Russian dominance¹⁷³. The economist also spoke about the sanctions against Russia and its pressure on Kazakhstan. Delays and failures in deliveries from Ukraine and Europe due to wide restrictions on the transportation of goods to/from the Russian Federation. According to Chukin, Kazakhstan became an "accidental" victim of these problems, due to the fact that most of Kazakhstan's road, rail, sea and even air transportation was carried out through the territory of the Russian Federation and the Republic of Belarus. As well as enterprises that closed due to sanctions in the Russian Federation and Belarus. In addition, according to the economist, Kazakhstan receives back pressure from the Russian Federation in direct and indirect forms. Here he refers to the provocative statements of Russian politicians and the problems in the Caspian pipeline¹⁷⁴. After Tokayev's statement about the DPR and LPR, the Russian court ruled to suspend the activities of the Caspian Pipeline Consortium, from where Kazakh oil is sent through Russian territory to world markets¹⁷⁵.

As for the necessary actions in this geopolitical situation, political scientist Satpaev suggests strengthening the position of the country. In his opinion, membership in the EAEU is becoming toxic for Kazakhstan and the Ak Orda should take a bold step out of it. Satpaev proposes to carry out political modernization, which consists of¹⁷⁶:

- Not to be involved in a military conflict of any intensity. Current Kazakhstan resembles Ukraine in 2014 from the point of view of the Russian authorities. There was a leaky security system, including information security, and there was a "fifth column" not only in society but also in power structures, including law enforcement agencies. Therefore, it is necessary to stop broadcasting Russian propaganda information resources.
- Do not get into the "crossfire" zone. That is, not to suffer from the struggle of the West with Russia, on both sides.

¹⁷³ Fariza Narbekova. Boleznennyj EAES dozhivaet svoi dni – economist [The painful EAEU is living out its days - economist] Ulys Media. March 27, 2022. [In Russian] <https://ulysmedia.kz/news/6354-boleznenyi-caes-dozhivaet-svoi-dni-ekonomist/>

¹⁷⁴ Almas Chukin. Kakie oskolki ot vzryva v ekonomike Rossii doletyat do Kazahstana [What fragments from the explosion in the Russian economy will reach Kazakhstan] Forbes Kazakhstan. April 18, 2022. [In Russian] <https://forbes.kz/life/opinion/kakie-oskolki-ot-vzryiva-v-ekonomike-rossii-doletyat-do-kazahstana/>

¹⁷⁵ Vusala Abbasova. Russian Court Suspends Caspian Pipeline Consortium Operations Used by Kazakhstan. Caspian News. July 8, 2022. <https://caspiannews.com/news-detail/russian-court-suspends-caspian-pipeline-consortium-operations-used-by-kazakhstan-2022-7-8-0/>

¹⁷⁶ Dosym Satpayev. Kazahstan ne dolzhen stat' shlyupkoj, pletushchejsya v kil'vatere rossijskogo krejsera [Kazakhstan should not become a boat plodding in the wake of a Russian cruiser] Forbes Kazakhstan. August 22, 2022. [In Russian] https://forbes.kz/process/expertise/dosyim_satpaev_kazahstan_ne_doljen_stat_shlyupkoy_pletushchejsya_v_kilv_atero_rossijskogo_krejsera/

- Play proactively and form own agenda in the field of security, economic cooperation, and minimization of risks that may threaten the entire region.
- The country must become too important to be threatened. For this, it is necessary to strengthen the positions of the Organization of Turkic States in various fields, from transport and logistics to the military. Closer interaction with the Muslim world is also needed. It is necessary to interface the transport and logistics program of the EU "Global Gate" with the Trans-Caspian international transport route. It also needs to use China as a counterweight to Russia. It should be extremely unprofitable for China to destabilize the situation in Kazakhstan.

Broadcasting of Russian channels at the moment forms a part of the population loyal to Russia in the present and near future. Therefore, Kazakhstan should become more confident in the information field. The Pro-Russian organizations such as the CSTO and the EAEU only harm Kazakhstan economically and politically. The war in Ukraine greatly influenced the politics of Kazakhstan. In this sense, the pressure of the Kremlin and the West is increasing day by day. The current Kazakh government probably won't be able to sit on two chairs for a long time. However, Russia, through its propaganda and politicians, is signaling that the Kremlin will consider Kazakhstan a hostile country if relations deteriorate. The current political situation leaves Kazakhstan no choice but to distance itself from Russia. However, to do this “painlessly” is a very difficult task. Therefore, Kazakhstan needs a political upgrade, where the country will become very important, the destabilization of which will be unacceptable either for the Islamic World, or for the Turkic states, or for China. Even if the situation worsens, Kazakhstan should at least have the guarantees that the country will receive the support of the world community, like Ukraine.

Concluding remarks.

The appointment of a new government and the concept of a "New Kazakhstan" were necessary to calm the protesters at the time. The weakening of Nazarbaev's personality cult was also necessary in order to show that the new government will be different from the old one. However, given the appointments in the new government, it is difficult to assess how different it is from the previous government. The opinions of experts on this matter also differ, as well as the opinions of Kazakhstanis. Some see these as promising changes, while

others are skeptical. However, many changes have been made, the results of which should improve the situation in general.

In the politics of Kazakhstan, there has always been the influence of Russia. However, in connection with the war in Ukraine, the situation became more complicated. Kazakhstan, trying to be neutral, found itself in a losing situation. Given the current economic situation in Russia, distancing from Russia economically and politically is the best solution. However, it is not known how the Russian government will react to such actions of Kazakhstan. Given the pro-Russian sentiment in some regions of the country, the situation is further complicated by the migration of Russians to Kazakhstan after the mobilization announced in Russia. Given the recent January protests that covered the entire country, and the geopolitical situation, Kazakhstan must strengthen its position in order to avoid internal and external conflicts.

General conclusions.

The real reasons for the January protest began long before 2022. Due to the cult of personality and political stagnation, problems arose in the country. The opposition, free media, and democratic institutions that highlighted the country's problems were severely suppressed. In addition, poverty, corruption, underdeveloped infrastructure, unequal distribution of income, and social inequality have brought citizens to the streets. The problems of political and social development of Kazakhstan since gaining independence resulted in January 2022.

Politicians such as Nursultan Nazarbayev who were members of the Communist party ruled the country based on their Soviet experience. The building of the personality cult, the establishment of the authoritarian regime, the "telephone justice", and the persecution of the democratic institutions which characterized the Soviet period, occurred in Kazakhstan. Surely, the scale and consequences were less than in the Soviet Union. The presidential power was strengthened with the adoption of the Constitution in 1995. It ended with the personality cult of the first President Nazarbayev, starting with the title "Leader of the Nation" and ending with the renaming of the capital in his honor. The opposition formed in the early 2000s tried to establish a dialogue with the authorities in order to achieve political changes. However, all attempts by the opposition were persecuted and suppressed. Political parties, unions and opposition movements were fragmented due to government pressure and internal problems. Newspapers, channels and journalists who worked independently, criticizing the government, were also harassed. With the growth of the cult of personality and corruption in the country, socio-economic problems arose, which were exacerbated day by day. The seriousness of social problems was first clearly manifested during protests in the Mangistau region in 2011. After that, the protest mood began to increase in Kazakhstan, as a result of which there were protests in 2016, and 2019. Based on the first and second chapters, the following conclusions can be made:

- The "older" or "Soviet" generation that inherited independent Kazakhstan failed to bring about democratic improvements and political change. Such events and changes were impossible in the conditions of political instability in society and the low political literacy of the population in the 1990s. However, this period, along with the improvement in the lives of citizens compared to the USSR, was used by the

authorities to strengthen power. In the early 2000s, when the opposition began to demand changes, the authorities reacted as harshly as possible, suppressing the opposition. The strengthening of central power and the persecution of democratic institutions alienated the government itself from the citizens, which led to political stagnation.

- Social inequality has increased in society due to high levels of corruption and improper distribution of income, which has grown into more serious economic problems. Low wages, social benefits, and pensions were not enough for ordinary citizens to live comfortably. Definitely, there were those who lived in abundance, but they were not the larger half of the population. The number of poor increased. Actions on the part of the state were ineffective to solve these problems.
- For now, the January protests are the peak of the protest moods that have formed after the Mangystau protest in 2011. Definitely, the January protests are a very strong outbreak that has swept the whole country. However, it should not be considered separately. Given the protest moods in Kazakhstan, it formed back in 2011. After that, they intensified. If in 2011 the people demanded better social conditions, then in 2016 the people were against the unpopular decisions of the authorities. In 2019, the protests were political in nature, that is, against the renaming of the capital and the election results. But if in 2011 the protests covered only Mangistau, then after their scale increased. Ultimately, protests across the country, given the internal problems in Kazakhstan, should have taken place. The increase in gas prices and the protests that began in Zhanaozen has become a trigger for expressing all the discontent of recent decades.

After the January events in Kazakhstan, there have been several significant changes. A new government was formed headed by Smailov. However, some were not satisfied with the new government, as it included many representatives of the "old team". Nevertheless, a national fund has been created, focused on improving the welfare of the citizens of the Republic of Kazakhstan. It is clear that Kazakhstan is waiting for change, but what exactly is still unknown. Summing up, we can draw several conclusions about the consequences of the January events.

- The decline of Nazarbayev's personality cult. Nazarbayev left the post of chairman of the Security Council and is currently not actively involved in the political life of the

country. In addition, the capital that bore his name regained its former name. However, it is erroneous to assert that there is no cult of personality. There are still streets, airports, etc. named in his honor.

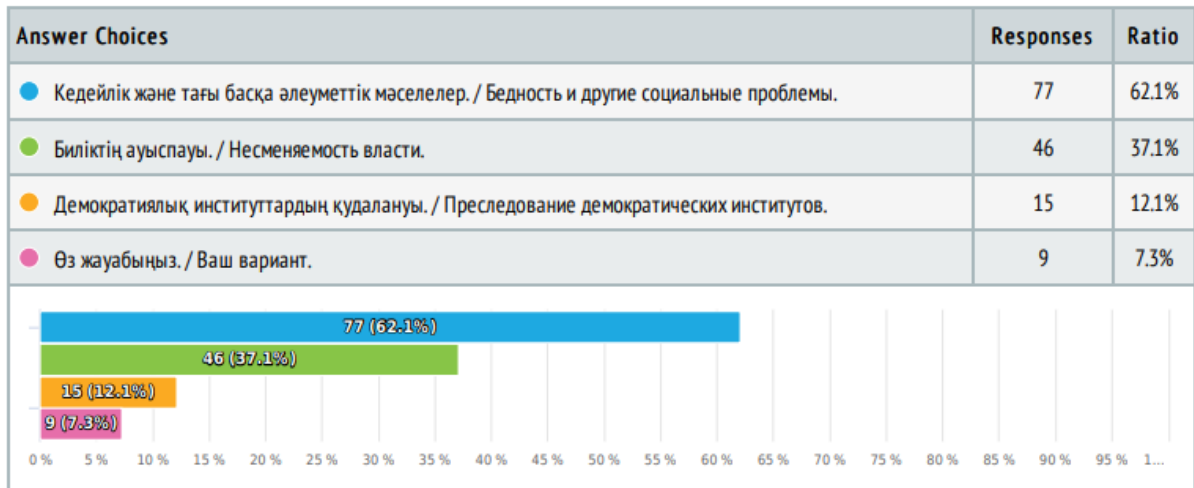
- New "old team" and the concept of "New Kazakhstan". A new government has been appointed in Kazakhstan. However, the new government looks more like a personnel reshuffle than anything new. The concept of the President looks promising on paper, but it is not known how it will be in practice. However, President Tokayev got time to stay in power and assert his legitimacy.
- Growth of political literacy of the population. The January events affected everyone, so everyone became interested in what was happening in the country. This means that the level of accountability of the state to the people has increased significantly. The establishment of a new personality cult in Kazakhstan in near future is most unlikely. But it should be noted that the social and political problems that brought citizens to the streets still exist. In this regard, President Tokayev has much less time than the previous president.

In 2022, an unstable geopolitical situation began in the post-Soviet space. The Russian invasion of Ukraine, border conflicts between Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, and conflicts in Nagorno-Karabakh created tension in the post-Soviet space. But more than all these conflicts, Kazakhstan suffered from the war in Ukraine, as a result of which the country found itself between two confrontations while maintaining neutrality. In this regard, the Ak Orda needs to carry out the necessary political and economic reforms in order to avoid another "January protests."

Survey results.

1 Газ бағасының өсуімен қатар, қаңтар айындағы жаппай ереуілдердің себебі қандай? / Помимо повышения цен газ, что является причиной январских протестов?

Multiple choice , answers 124 x, unanswered 0 x

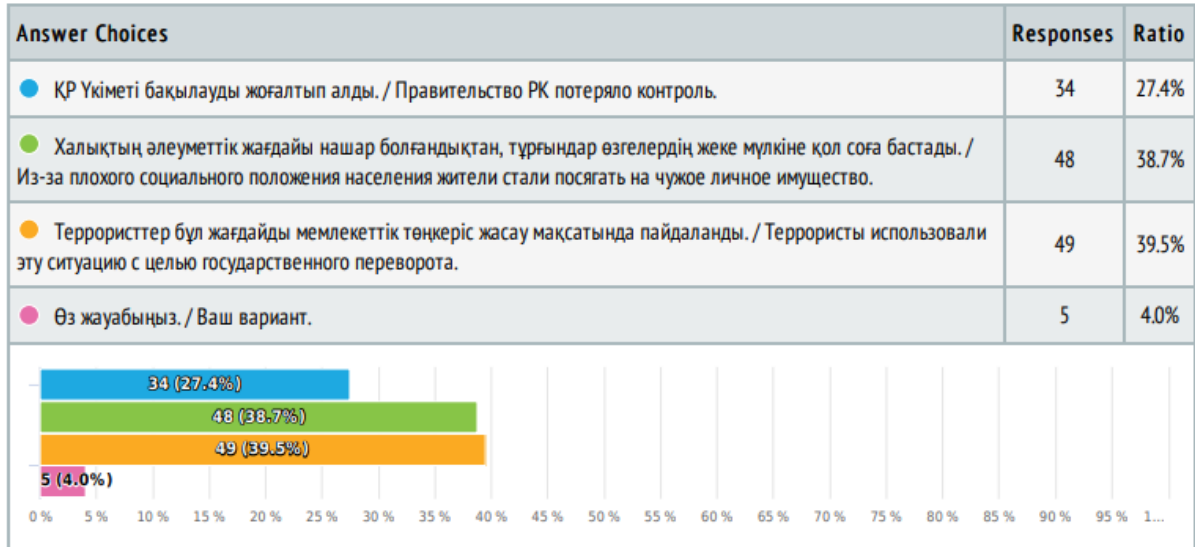


1. In addition to the increase in gas prices, what is the reason for the January protests?

Answer Choices	Responses	Ratio
Poverty and other social problems.	77	62.1 %
The irremovability of power.	46	37.1 %
Persecution of democratic institutions.	15	12.1 %
Your option.	9	7.3 %

2 Сіздің ойыңызша, не себепті Алматы қаласындағы ереуіл жаппай тәртіпсіздіктерге ұласып кетті? / По вашему мнению, почему митинги в Алмате превратились в массовые беспорядки?

Multiple choice , answers 124 x, unanswered 0 x

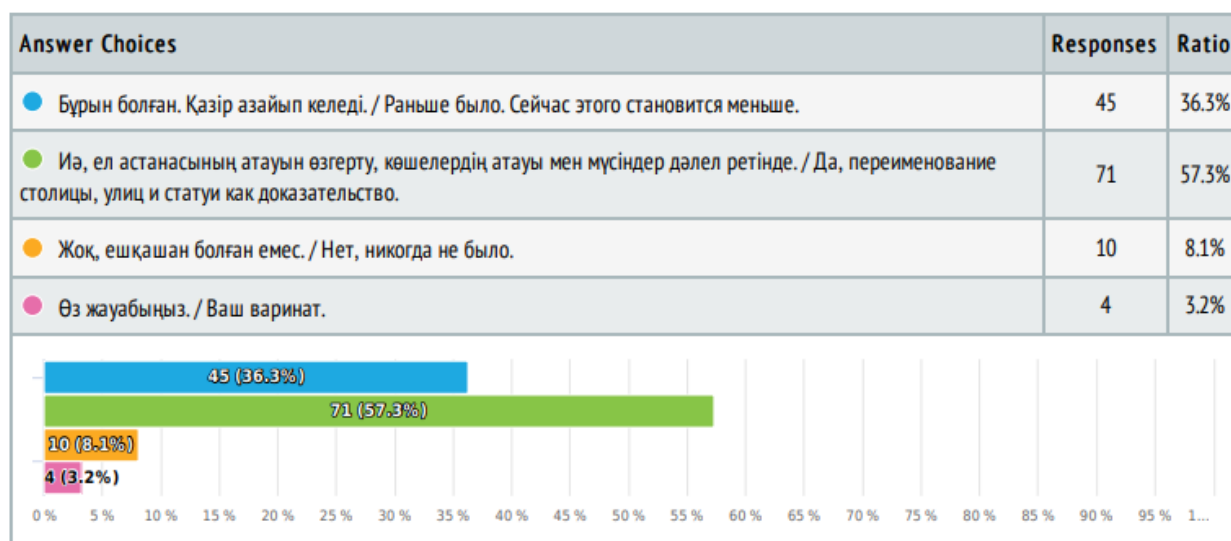


2. In your opinion, why did the rallies in Almaty turn into mass riots?

Answer Choices	Responses	Ratio
The Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan has lost control	34	27.4 %
Due to the poor social situation of the population, residents began to encroach on someone else's personal property.	48	38.7 %
The terrorists used this situation for the purpose of a coup d'etat.	49	39.5 %
Your option.	5	4.0 %

3 Қазақстанда жеке тұлғаға бағыну (немесе табыну) бар деп есептейсізбе? / Считаете ли вы что в Казахстане есть культ личности?

Multiple choice , answers 124 x, unanswered 0 x



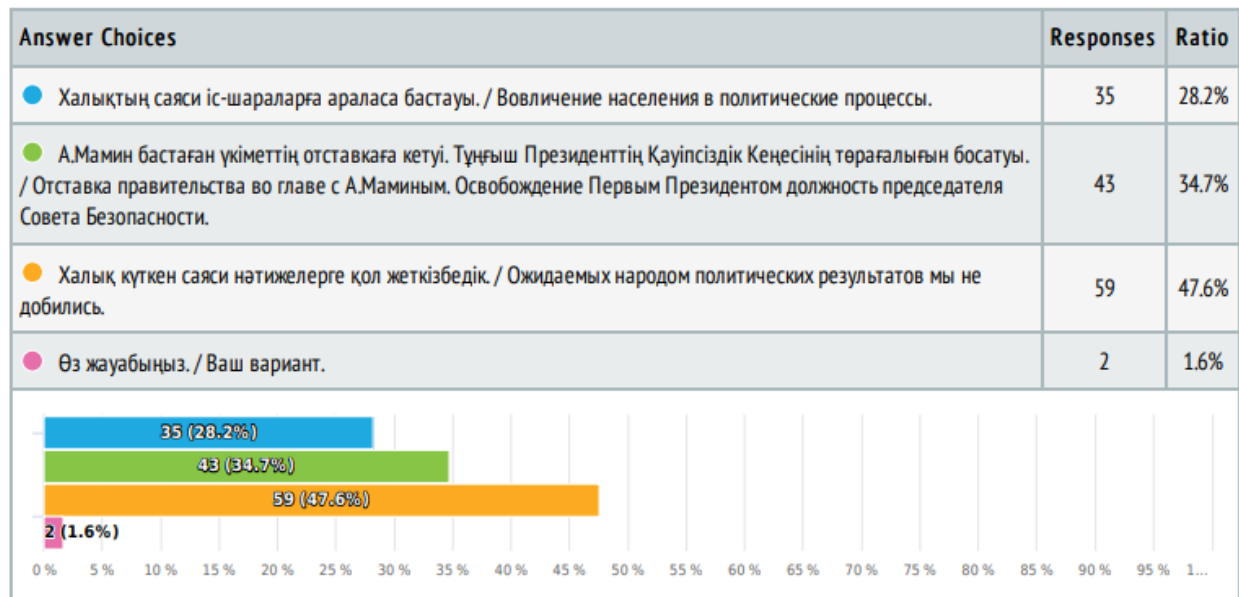
3. Do you think there is a cult of personality in Kazakhstan?

Answer Choices	Responses	Ratio
It used to be. Now it's getting less	45	36.3 %
Yes, the renaming of the capital, streets and statues as proof.	71	57.3 %
No, it never was.	10	8.1 %
Your option.	4	3.2 %

4 Қаңтар оқиғасының басты нәтижесі ... / Главный результат январских событий это

...

Multiple choice , answers 124 x, unanswered 0 x

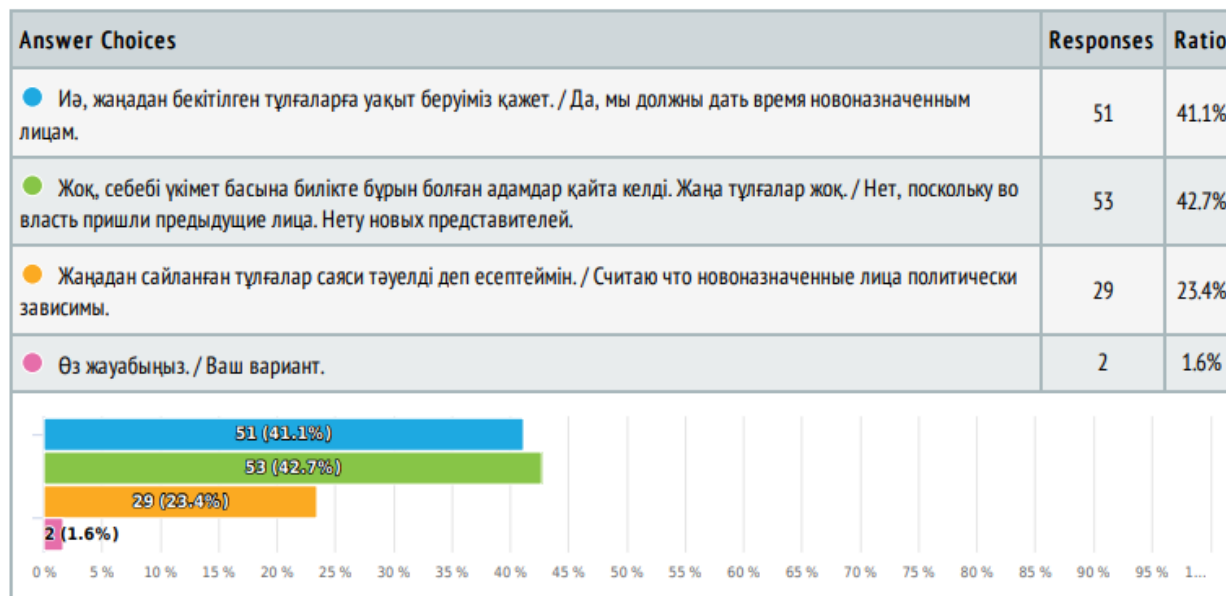


4. The main result of the January events is ...

Answer Choices	Responses	Ratio
Involvement of the population in political processes.	35	28.2 %
Resignation of the government headed by A. Manin. Resignation of the First President from the post of Chairman of the Security Council.	43	34.7 %
We have not achieved the political results that the people expected.	59	47.6 %
Your option.	2	1.6 %

5 Қаңтар оқиғасынан кейін жаңадан сайланған үкіметке көңіліңіз толды ма? /
Довольны ли вы Правительством которое было назначено после январских
событий?

Multiple choice , answers 124 x, unanswered 0 x

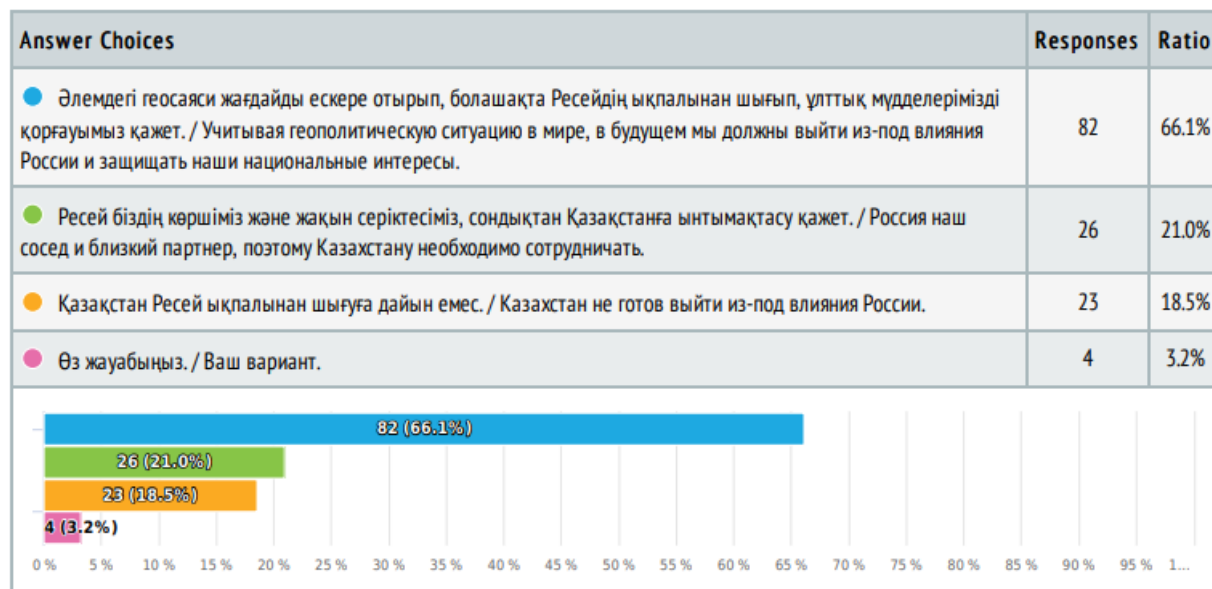


5. Are you satisfied with the Government that was appointed after the January events?

Answer Choices	Responses	Ratio
Yes, we must give time to the newly appointed persons.	51	41.1 %
No, because the previous persons came to power. There are no new representatives.	53	42.7 %
I think the newly appointed persons are politically dependent.	29	23.4 %
Your option.	2	1.6 %

6 Ресей Федерациясымен одан әрі ынтымақтастық және оның Қазақстанға саяси ықпалы туралы не ойлайсыз? / Что вы думаете о дальнейшем сотрудничестве с Российской Федерацией и ее политическом влиянии на Казахстан?

Multiple choice , answers 124 x, unanswered 0 x

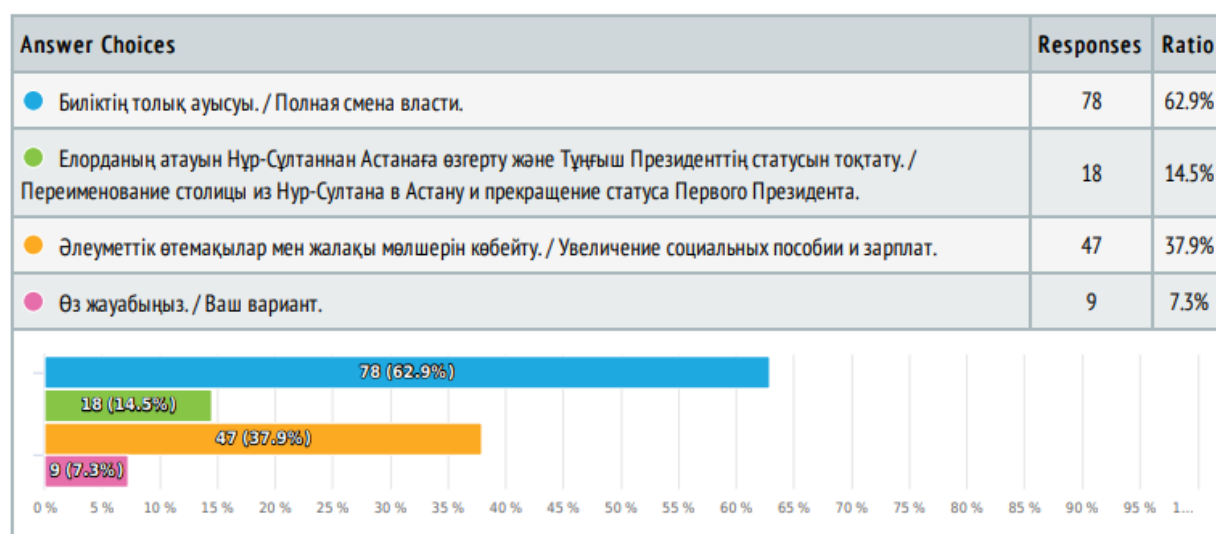


6. What do you think about further cooperation with the Russian Federation and its political influence on Kazakhstan?

Answer Choices	Responses	Ratio
Considering the geopolitical situation in the world, in the future we must get out from under the influence of Russia and protect our national interests.	82	66.1 %
Russia is our neighbor and close partner, so Kazakhstan needs to cooperate.	26	21.0 %
Kazakhstan is not ready to get out from under the influence of Russia	23	18.5 %
Your option.	4	3.2 %

7 Сіздің ойыңызша, қаңтардағы наразылық білдірушілердің ең басты талабы не болды? / По вашему мнению, каким было главное требование протестующих?

Multiple choice , answers 124 x, unanswered 0 x

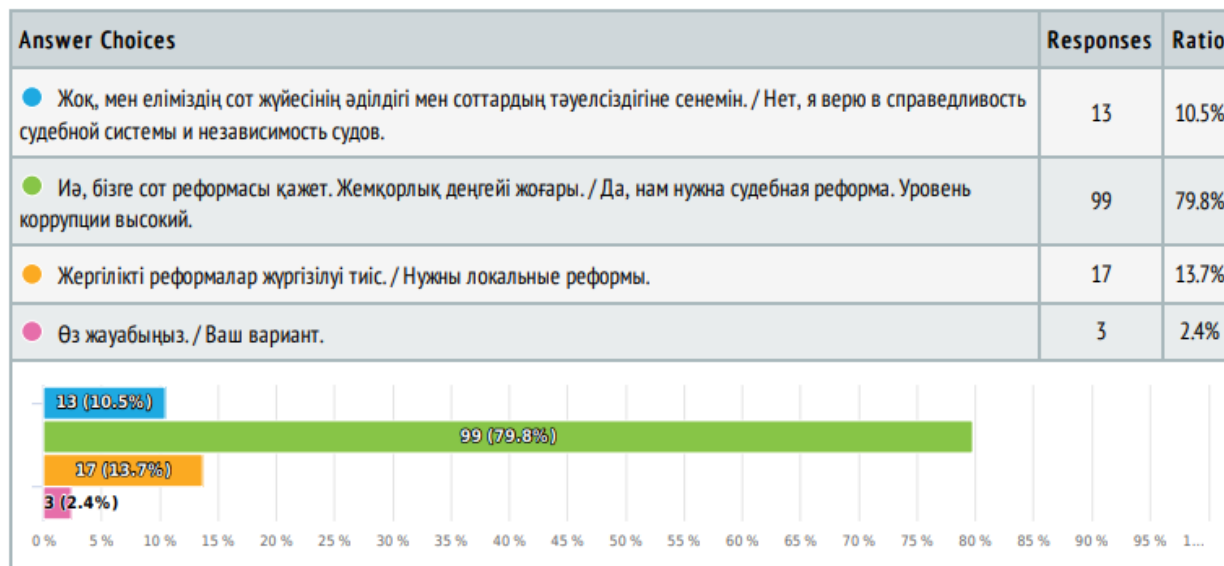


7. In your opinion, what was the main demand of the protesters?

Answer Choices	Responses	Ratio
Complete change of power.	78	62.9 %
Renaming of the capital from Nur-Sultan to Astana and termination of the status of the First President.	18	14.5 %
Increase social benefits and salaries.	47	37.9 %
Your option.	9	7.3 %

8 Қазақстандағы жағдайды өзгерту үшін сот жүйесін реформалау қажет деп ойлайсызба? / Считаете ли необходимым проведение судебных реформ для изменения ситуации в Казахстане?

Multiple choice , answers 124 x, unanswered 0 x

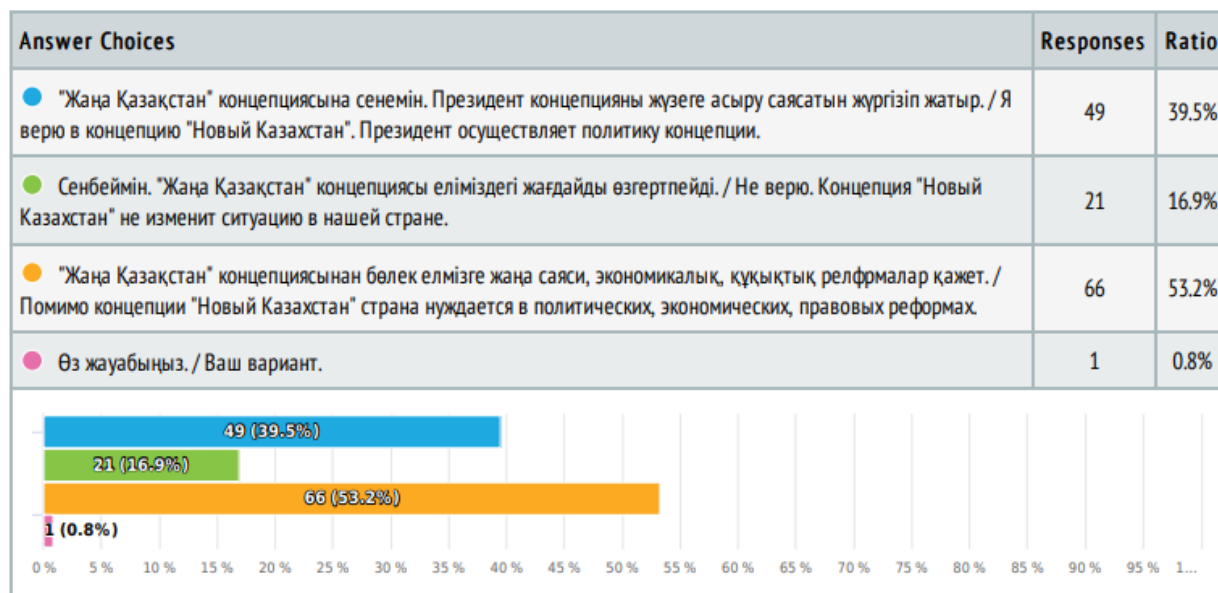


8. Do you think it is necessary to carry out judicial reform to change the situation in Kazakhstan?

Answer Choices	Responses	Ratio
No, I believe in the justice of the judicial system and the independence of the courts.	13	10.5 %
Yes, we need judicial reform. The level of corruption is high	99	79.8 %
Local reforms are needed	17	13.7 %
Your option.	3	2.4 %

9 Президент Қ.К.Тоқаевтың жолдауындағы "Жаңа Қазақстан" концепциясына көзқарасыңыз қандай? / Как вы относитесь к концепции "Новый Казахстан" в послании Президента К.К.Токаева?

Multiple choice , answers 124 x, unanswered 0 x



9. How do you feel about the concept of "New Kazakhstan" in the message of President Tokayev?

Answer Choices	Responses	Ratio
I believe in the concept of "New Kazakhstan". The President implements the policy of the concept.	49	39.5 %
I do not believe. The concept of "New Kazakhstan" will not change the situation in our country.	21	16.9 %
In addition to the concept of "New Kazakhstan", the country needs political, economic and legal reforms.	66	53.2 %
Your option.	1	0.8 %

10. In your opinion, what should be the next steps for the development of the country?

Respondents' recommendations, grouped by main mentions	Number of mentions
Answers related to combating corruption and its prevention in society and in all state bodies.	26
Suggestions concerning the improvement of the social life of the population and, in general, the well-being of citizens.	16
Demands for a complete change of power and the appointment of new civil servants.	9
Answers calling to improve education, medicine, and science fields.	9
Answers to building an honest, cohesive, mutually trusting society.	8
Answers to improve yourself and not blame the government.	7
Answers calling for a government accountable to the people where demands are heard.	6
Answers suggesting economic, political, legal reforms.	6
Answers calling for improvement of democratic institutions.	5
Calls to trust President Tokayev and give him time to reform.	5
Suggestions to empower young generation and give them governance.	5
Start with religious and spiritual values.	4
Weaken Russian influence and pursue an independent policy.	4
Hire real professionals.	3
Get rid of the personality cult of Nazarbayev and completely deprive him of power.	3
Requirements for the appointment of local akims by local voting among the population (decentralization of power).	2
Pay attention to the rights of women and children.	2
Change in the judiciary.	2
Withdrawal from the CSTO and the EAEU.	1
Increase domestic production.	1
Elimination of division into clans in power.	1
Increase the influence of the Kazakh language.	1
Change the constitution.	1

Increase the military budget and improve the army.	1
No answers.	20

Tables.

Table number 1.

<i>Ethnicity</i>	<u>1989</u>	<u>1999</u>	<u>2009</u>	<u>2021</u>
Kazakhs	39.69	53.42	63.07	69.01
Russians	37.86	30.04	23.70	18.4
Ukrainaians	5.53	3.61	2.12	1.36
Germans	5.84	2.41	1.11	0.92

National composition of Kazakhstan. Agency for Strategic planning and reforms of the Republic of Kazakhstan Bureau of National statistics (stat.gov.kz)

Table number 2.

	2010	2011- 2012	2012- 2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020 (I- VI)
Number of peaceful assemblies	64	462	119	114	71	52	36	32	227	176

The number of peaceful assemblies in Kazakhstan between 2010-2020. Kazakhstan International Bureau for Human Rights and the Rule of Law (KIBHR)

Table number 3.

	2010	2011- 2012	2012- 2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020 (I- VI)
Political	40%	9%	1%	-	-	15.5%	5.5%	43.75%	78%	65%
Economic	53%	58%	70%	49%	45%	15.5%	16.6%	12.5%	9%	20%
Social	7%	33%	29%	51%	55%	69%	78%	43.75%	13%	15%

The nature of peaceful assemblies by years. Kazakhstan International Bureau for Human Rights and the Rule of Law (KIBHR)

Chronology of the events¹⁷⁷:

- *January 2.* Since January 1, after the transition to market pricing of liquefied gas, it has doubled in price in the Mangistau region. Hundreds of people in the city of Zhanaozen came out to protest against rising prices for liquefied gas. Participants of the action blocked the road near the city akimat. Later, protests continued in other areas of the Mangistau region.
- *January 3.* Akim of the Mangistau region, Nurlan Nogaev, came to the protesters in Zhanaozen, but they did not listen to him. The number of protesters in Zhanaozen exceeded three thousand people. In the cities of Aktobe, Shymkent, Almaty, Nur-Sultan, people began to gather in support of the protesters in Zhanaozen.
- *January 4.* Residents of many regions of the country joined the protests in Zhanaozen. Oil workers began to gather in Zhanaozen, Aktau, Aktobe and Atyrau, coal miners in Karaganda and copper smelters and miners in Zhezkazgan. Most of the protests took place near city akimats or in central squares. In the Mangistau region, it was reported that gas prices would remain the same, but the protesters did not disperse. Protesters across the country began to express dissatisfaction with the constant increase in the prices of goods and put forward political demands. Protests have become more massive in Almaty, Aktobe and Shymkent. Internet and television were completely shut down throughout the country, with the exception of a few state channels.
- *January 5.* On the morning of January 5, Tokayev accepted the resignation of the government. In the morning, near the Altyn Orda market in Almaty, police Special Forces used tear gas and stun grenades to disperse demonstrators. In the afternoon, shooting began in Almaty, protesters broke into the building of the city administration and set it on fire. Other government buildings, such as the prosecutor's office and the office of the Nur Otan party, were also damaged during the clash. Also in Almaty, unidentified persons broke into a building on Republic Square, where state television channels are located, and destroyed technical equipment. In Taldykorgan, protesters demolished a monument to former President Nursultan Nazarbayev. Nazarbayev voluntarily stepped down as chairman of the Security Council, and President Tokayev

¹⁷⁷ The chronology of events is based on: Polnaya Hronologiya Yanvrskih Sobytij [Full Chronology of January Events] Radio Azattyq RFE/RL. <https://rus.azattyq.org/a/kazakhstan-unrest-timeline/31654270.html>; Behind the Unrest in Kazakhstan. Europe & Central Asia. The International Crisis Group. 14 January 2022. <https://www.crisisgroup.org/europe-central-asia/central-asia/kazakhstan/behind-unrest-kazakhstan>; Kazakhstan: Set Independent Inquiry into January Events. Human Rights Watch. February 9, 2022. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/02/09/kazakhstan-set-independent-inquiry-january-events>

assumed his duties. In Aktobe, protesters seized the building of the akimat. On the evening of January 5, a group of unknown people seized the Almaty airport and rioted there.

- *January 6.* Tokayev, referring to an external threat from a "gang of terrorists," turned to the CSTO for military assistance. The President of Kazakhstan did not specify which "gangs of terrorists" carried out the attack. Robbery of shops and banks began in Almaty, shots are heard in the city. On the Republic Square, the military on special equipment began to use firearms against the citizens who were there. CSTO troops arrived in Kazakhstan with a "peacekeeping mission". The people expressed dissatisfaction with Tokayev's decision to send in foreign troops. Unknown people set fire to the building of the Taldykorgan akimat. It became known about the dead in Kyzylorda and Shymkent.
- *January 7.* The authorities of Kazakhstan announced the restoration of the constitutional order and taking control of government buildings and akimats. Tokayev said the country was "attacked by 20,000 militants" and said he ordered law enforcement to shoot "to kill without warning". The authorities reported that a "counter-terrorist operation" is continuing in the country.
- *January 8.* On national television, Tokayev said that 20,000 foreign and local bandits and terrorists, armed and well trained, were trying to stage a coup d'état in the country. It was announced that the former head of the National Security Committee, Karim Massimov, was placed in a pre-trial detention center on charges of "high treason." In Zhanaozen and Aktau, the protesters began to disperse. Two children aged 4 and 11 were shot dead during the riots in Almaty. The Ministry of Internal Affairs said that the number of detainees in the country had reached 4,404 people, of which 26 were killed and 26 were injured during the "counter-terrorist operation".
- *January 9.* The Ministry of Internal Affairs reported that 5969 people were detained. Including 133 people on suspicion of committing "serious crimes", 516 people were taken under administrative arrest. Tokayev said at a meeting of the operational headquarters that "the situation has stabilized and is under control in all regions of the country, the authorities have cleared the akimats of terrorists."
- *January 10.* The country has declared a National Day of Mourning. There were reports of the death of Colonel of the National Security Committee of Kazakhstan Azamat Ibraev and the head of the Internal Affairs Directorate of the Zhambyl region,

General Zhanat Suleimenov. The Internet in the country still worked intermittently, in Almaty it worked for only a few hours.

- *January 11.* Alikhan Smailov has been appointed prime minister. Tokayev announced the new composition of the government. Most of the ministers kept their posts. At a meeting in parliament, Tokayev, who had previously mentioned ex-president Nazarbayev several times in his speeches, mentioned Nazarbayev only once, saying that “thanks to the first president of Elbasy, a group of very profitable companies and a layer of people who are rich even by international standards.” He also noted that it is necessary "to pay tribute to the people, to help them on a systematic and regular basis", and instructed to create the "Qazaqstan halqyna" fund, which means to Kazakh people from Kazakh. The Prosecutor General's Office stated that 9900 people were detained in the country, 412 criminal cases were initiated, the authorities report that the situation in the country has stabilized.
- *January 12.* During the meeting in Almaty, a meeting of the operational headquarters was held under the chairmanship of the President of Kazakhstan, Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, during which it was reported that "Almaty will completely eliminate terrorists." The President of Kazakhstan said that the CSTO detachments would be gradually withdrawn from the country from January 13. The number of missing Almaty residents has increased. A lot of videos were distributed on the Internet space of Kazakhstan showing illegal and violent footage with the participation of protesters, as well as police officers.

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