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EVOLUTION OF THE BILATERAL PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN EUROPEAN UNION AND KAZAKHSTAN: RESULTS FROM THE CONTENT ANALYSIS OF THE PCA AND EPCA

The European Union (EU) is one of the key partners for the Republic of Kazakhstan. In 2015, the European Union and the Republic of Kazakhstan signed the Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (EPCA), which replaced the previous Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA). This article aims to explore the evolution of partnership priorities by analyzing these two documents, the PCA and EPCA.

The main objective of this article is to evaluate the general fields of cooperation between the European Union and Kazakhstan as outlined in both agreements, and how they have changed over some time. This will be done using a quantitative content analysis with manual word frequency counting.

The theoretical foundation of the paper includes examining the role of the PCA and EPCA in European Union's foreign policy, conducting a literature review on European Union -Kazakhstan relations, and providing background information on the political, economic, environmental, and other ties between the European Union and the Republic of Kazakhstan. Consequently, this article summarizes the priorities of the European-Kazakh relationship and their evolution over time, employing an empirical approach through the text analysis of the two agreements.

Key words: European Union, Kazakhstan, PCA, EPCA, content analysis.

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Еуропалық Одақ пен Қазақстан арасындағы екіжақты серіктестіктің эволюциясы: ӘЫК және КӘЫК мазмұнын талдау нәтижелері

Еуропалық Одақ (ЕО) Қазақстан Республикасы үшін негізгі серіктестердің бірі болып табылады. 2015 жылы Еуропалық Одақ пен Қазақстан Республикасы бұрынғы Әріптестік және ынтымақтастық туралы Келісімді (ӘЫК) ауыстырған Кеңейтілген әріптестік және ынтымақтастық туралы келісімге (КӘЫК) қол қойды. Бұл мақаланың мақсаты – осы екі құжатты, ӘЫК және КӘЫК талдау арқылы серіктестік басымдықтарының эволюциясын зерттеу.

Бұл мақаланың негізгі мақсаты екі келісімде де белгіленген Еуропалық Одақ пен Қазақстан арасындағы ынтымақтастықтың ортақ бағыттарын және олардың бірнеше уақыт өткеннен кейін қалай дамығанын бағалау болып табылады. Бұл талдау сөз жиілігін қолмен есептеу арқылы сандық мазмұнды талдау арқылы жүзеге асырылды.

Мақаланың теориялық негізіне Еуропалық Одақтың сыртқы саясатындағы ӘЫК және КӘЫК рөлін зерттеу, Еуропалық Одақ -Қазақстан қарым-қатынастары бойынша әдебиеттерді шолу, сондай-ақ Еуропалық Одақ пен Қазақстан Республикасы арасындағы саяси, экономикалық, экологиялық және басқа да байланыстар туралы бастапқы ақпарат беру кіреді. Осылайша, бұл мақалада екі келісім мәтіндерін талдау арқылы эмпирикалық тәсілді пайдалана отырып, еуропалық-қазақстандық қатынастардың басымдықтары және олардың уақыт бойынша эволюциясы жинақталған.

Түйін сөздер: Еуропалық Одақ, Қазақстан, ӘЫК, КӘЫК, контент-анализ.

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Эволюция двустороннего партнерства между Европейским Союзом и Казахстаном: результаты контент-анализа СПС и СРПС

Европейский Союз (ЕС) является одним из ключевых партнеров для Республики Казахстан. В 2015 году Европейский Союз и Республика Казахстан подписали Соглашение о расширенном партнерстве и сотрудничестве (СРПС), которое заменило предыдущее Соглашение о партнерстве и сотрудничестве (СПС). Цель данной статьи – изучить эволюцию приоритетов партнерства путем анализа этих двух документов – СПС и СРПС.

Основная цель данной статьи – оценить общие области сотрудничества между Европейским Союзом и Казахстаном, изложенные в обоих соглашениях, и то, как они эволюционировали с течением некоторого времени. Данный анализ осуществлен с применением количественного контент-анализа с ручным подсчетом частоты слов.

Теоретическая основа статьи включает изучение роли СПС и СРПС во внешней политике Европейского Союза, проведение обзора литературы по отношениям Европейского Союза и Казахстана, а также предоставление справочной информации о политических, экономических, экологических и других связях между Европейским Союзом и Республикой Казахстан. Таким образом, в данной статье обобщены приоритеты европейско-казахстанских отношений и их эволюция с течением времени с использованием эмпирического подхода посредством анализа текстов двух соглашений.

Ключевые слова: Европейский Союз, Казахстан, СПС, СРПС, контент-анализ.

Introduction

Since 1991, the European Union has become one of the important partners for independent Republic of Kazakhstan. The European Union and Kazakhstan signed an Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement in December 2015, which replaced the previous Partnership and Cooperation Agreement. The EPCA is a new document, the first of its type with a Central Asian partner, elevated ties between the EU and Kazakhstan to a new level and marked an important milestone in the EU-Kazakhstan relationship's 30-year history (EU-Kazakhstan relations factsheet).

The EPCA comes into effect on March 1, 2020, after being accepted by all EU Member States and the European Parliament. The EPCA encourages the EU and its member states to develop and expand collaboration with Kazakhstan in critical policy areas such as economic and financial cooperation, energy, transportation, the environment and climate change, social concerns, and education (European Council, 2015).

It is worth noting that the EU-Central Asia relations are based on the recent 2019 Strategy titled «The EU and Central Asia: New Opportunities for a Stronger Partnership» from a regional perspective. The Strategy document serves as the legal foundation for the EU's regional strategy to Central Asia, which aims to help the area become more resilient, prosperous, and interconnected (European Council, 2019).

After the adoption of the new EPCA, which replaced PCA, there is a lack on academic debate over the comparison of two documents. This article fills the gap to trace the main fields of cooperation between the EU and Kazakhstan, which have been enhanced particularly, and how the focus was switched or changed. Moreover, we investigate the research on the EU-Central Asia relations, since Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan have signed new EPCA with the EU in 2019 and 2022 respectively (EU-Central Asia relations factsheet). Since the texts of new EPCAs for Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan are not in force yet, and Kazakhstan remains a pioneer among the countries of the region that have signed this kind of agreement, this research is focused on evaluating the relations' evolution by the example of Kazakh PCA and EPCA's analysis.

In addition, we used empirical method of the research, applying the quantitative content analysis, conducted manually. The hypothesis on whether the EU-Kazakhstan bilateral priorities have changed from 1995 to 2015 was tested.

The major goal of this article is to compare the content analysis findings and to investigate the most areas in which the EU and Kazakhstan were involved, counting the most often appearing terms. In result, during the process of doing a content analysis on both the PCA and the EPCA, we discovered that the phrase “cooperation” was used a total of 140 and 358 times, respectively, across the two documents.

We are certain that these findings demonstrate the significance of increasing collaboration between both parties. On the other hand, it is patently evident that the primary emphasis of collaboration has slightly shifted throughout the course of time. Words like “development,” “businesses,” “economic,” “legislation,” and “trade” are among the most often used in PCA. However, the phrases “rights,” “goods,” “trade,” “energy,” and “law” are the ones that occur most often in the EPCA. Both official papers maintain the importance of the commercial sector. In addition, it is important to bring up the proof of the term “right” that is included in the EPCA document. Given the frequency with which the term “rights” occurs in the most recent agreement, our assertion is that the European Union places a greater emphasis on its normative agenda for Kazakhstan to respect human rights.

The structure of the article is as follows: the article’s theoretical foundation comprises the PCA and EPCA’s assessment in EU foreign policy, a literature review on the EU-Kazakhstan relations, and background on EU-Kazakhstan political, economic, environmental, and other ties. Further, we move to the methodological approach of the article. The last sections are dedicated to the discussion of the manually conducted content analysis of the 1995 PCA and 2015 EPCA.

Materials and methods

The empirical research approach of quantitative content analysis of the texts of the 1995 PCA and 2015 EPCA between the EU and Kazakhstan is used in this paper to track the history of bilateral policy goals. The most frequently occurring words in the publications were manually monitored. Full copies of the PCA and EPCA documents were downloaded and printed in English from the European Council website. The word-counting notes were left in the paper copies of two papers. The findings are shown in the tables below, which indicate the amount of those terms that appear the most often in the publications.

However, the research may have its methodological limitation, since content analysis reveals the content in text but it cannot interpret the content’s significance. But this type of the methodological tool is relevant for the document

analysis, as the main prevailed priorities are explored by means of the word frequency query.

Literature review

In literature the main focus of the EU- Kazakhstan relations dedicated to the energy sector (Kastakova, Barinkova, 2019: 120) from a geostrategic prospective (Gast, 2014). However, there is some shift towards bilateral interactions in culture and social affairs (Kembayev, 2021: 179), and the EU’s normative agenda for Kazakhstan (Arynov, 2021; 2022). According to Peyrouse, the EU has less political power in Kazakhstan but a greater economic effect than China and the US (Peyrouse, 2014). Furthermore, Kastakova and Barinkova (2019: 122) insist Kazakhstan has not only become an important Central Asian commercial partner, but also a trusted EU partner in safeguarding regional peace, which makes security field of cooperation to be a priority as well.

The documents such as PCA and EPCA between the European Union and Kazakhstan are not widely discussed in academia. There are several descriptive researches, which focused on the comparative analysis of the documents by sorting the cooperation fields between the EU and Kazakhstan (Kastakova, Barinkova, 2019; Kembayev, 2021). This article addresses a vacuum in the literature on PCA and EPCA document analysis, finishing with empirical findings.

The EU’s foreign policy through a prism of the PCA and EPCA

In order to analyze the workings of EU foreign policy, the concept of external governance has been used (Winn, Gänzle, 2022: 4). On the other hand, this term stands in stark contrast to actor-based approaches to EU external relations, which are rooted in traditional methods to the study of foreign policy (Winn, Gänzle, 2022: 5), and it starts with an extension for governments located in regions other than Europe (Lavenex, Schimmelfennig, 2009:780). The main tools of European foreign policy are claimed to be Partnership and Cooperation Agreements (PCA) and Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreements, which is a direct continuation of the PCA (Metera 2022: 90). Arguably, such kinds of

documents are instruments for the expansion of the EU's cooperation with third countries, providing the legal foundation for agreements and direct collaboration with the EU. Moreover, they seek to systematize the model of establishing relations by bringing together the guiding principles, standards, and manner in which this cooperation should develop (Metera 2022: 90).

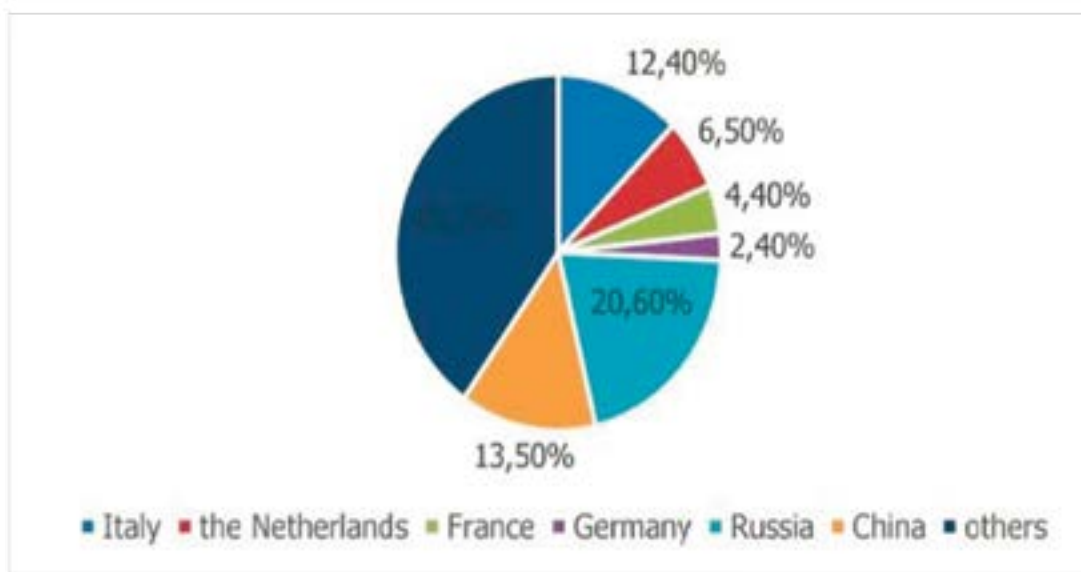
In addition to facilitating the introduction of European investments and establishing trade relations with nations covered by the European Neighbourhood Policy as well as nations outside of it, like post-Soviet space, the Middle East, or Asian nations, the PCA aims to support economic development, stable democracy, and civil society in partner nations (Metera 2022: 91).

Since the EU's capacity to exert external governance in Central Asia is constrained by physical distance (Winn, Gänzle, 2022: 5), the EU undertakes political, economic, and normative discourse with the area as a whole as well as on a bilateral basis with each of the Central Asian countries (Fawn, 2021: 3), including Kazakhstan.

Giving a background on the cooperation between the EU and Kazakhstan

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the EU has defined its position towards states of Central Asia. A legal basis for the EU-Kazakhstan bilateral relations was Partnership and Cooperation Agreement signed in 1995, which came into force in 1999. Currently, bilateral cooperation is regulated by Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement, signed in 2015, and came into force 2019. The EU-Kazakhstan EPCA covers different spheres of interactions such as economic, trade, energy, environmental and social sectors.

The European Union is Kazakhstan's most important trading partner, accounting for forty percent of the country's total exports, and also one of the most important foreign investors in Kazakhstan, accounting for forty-eight percent of the country's total gross foreign direct investment and approximately sixty percent of the total net FDI stocks in 2018 (EU-Kazakhstan relations factsheet).

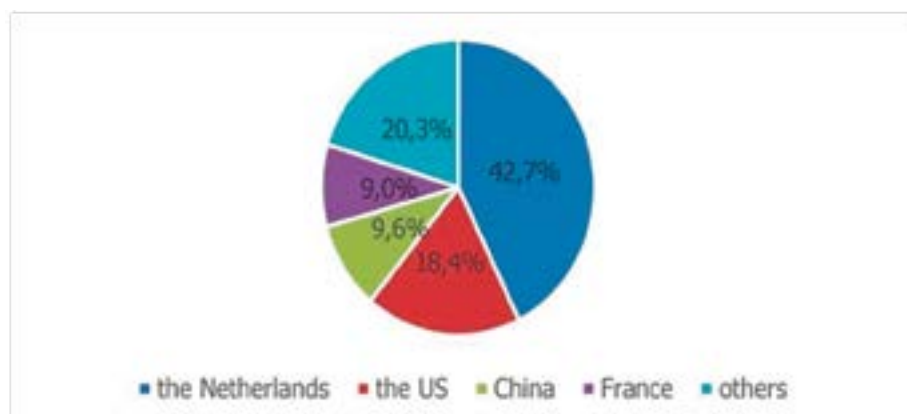


Source: Kastakova, Barinkova, 2019: 115

Figure 1 – Foreign trade partners of Kazakhstan

See Figure 2 below for a breakdown of which countries contributed the most capital in 2018 for Kazakh economy: the Netherlands (42.7%),

the United States (18.4%), China (9.6%), and France (9%) (Kastakova, Barinkova, 2019: 115).

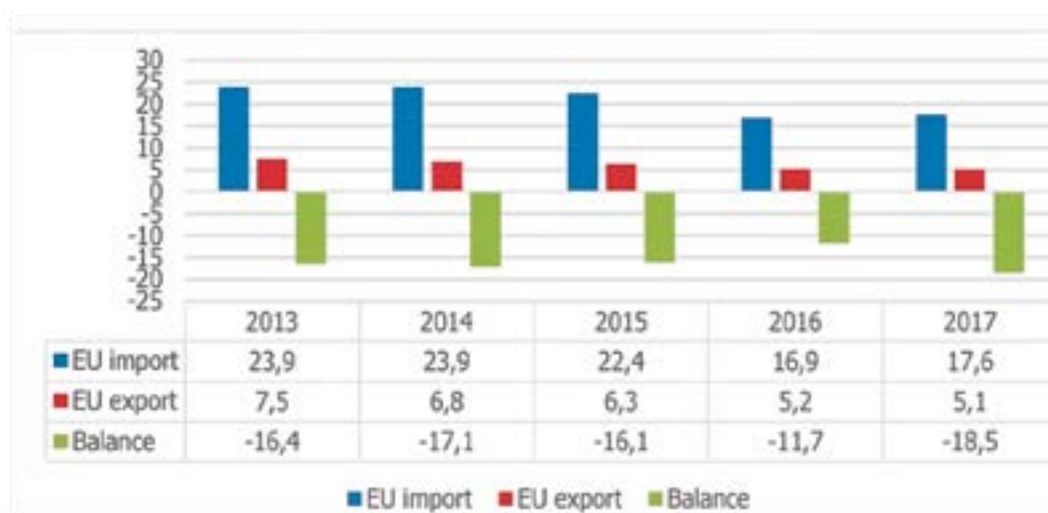


Source: Kastakova, Barinkova, 2019: 115

Figure 2 – Foreign direct investments (2018) in Kazakhstan

Moreover, Kazakhstan is ranked as the EU's 33rd largest trading partner, accounting for 0.7% of the EU's total trade in goods with the rest of the world in 2020, while the EU is Kazakhstan's trade partner, accounting for 29.7% of the country's total trade in goods in 2020 (EU-Kazakhstan relations

factsheet). The drop in Kazakhstan's trading with the EU between 2015 and 2017 was driven by a general decline in Kazakhstan's foreign trade, which was impacted by Russian sanctions and changes in global oil prices (Kastakova, Barinkova, 2019: 115).



Source: Kastakova, Barinkova, 2019: 116

Figure 3 – Foreign trade between Kazakhstan and the EU in 2013-2017 in bln. Euro

According to the EEAS data of 2020, the total value of commodities traded between Kazakhstan and the European Union increased to €18.6 billion. Imports into the EU were €12.6 billion, the vast majority of which consisted of petroleum and mining goods (€11.8 billion, or 93.7% of the total

value). The machinery and transport equipment sector dominated EU exports, with €2.9 billion (48.3% of total), followed by the chemical sector, which contributed €1.6 billion (26.7%), and other manufactured products, which contributed €0.5 billion (8.3%) (EU-Kazakhstan relations factsheet).

Arguably, the EU has shown persistent support for Kazakhstan's application to join the World Commerce Organization in 2015, which would enable the nation to more easily integrate into the global economy by adhering to the standards and regulations that govern international trade.

The energy sector, perhaps, continues to be one of the most crucial sectors of cooperation between the EU and Kazakhstan. Moreover, as of 2021 Kazakhstan has already established itself as the third biggest non-OPEC supplier to the EU, with over 70% of its oil exports going to the EU (representing 6% of EU oil consumption) (EU-Kazakhstan relations factsheet). Furthermore, the oil and gas sector in Kazakhstan is receiving considerable investment from major energy corporations located in the European Union. On the other hand, the Kazakh national oil and gas corporation Kaz Munay Gas holds significant EU-based assets for refining, trade, and retail in South-Eastern Europe and nations of the Eastern Partnership.

It is the responsibility of the Subcommittee on Energy, Transport, Environment, and Climate Change of the EPCA to act as a facilitator for the bilateral negotiations on environment and climate change. These discussions are held within of the EPCA's established parameters. The European Union (EU) backs Kazakhstan's efforts to improve the country's water and climate security. It provides funding for investments and interventions that will improve water usage efficiency and climate resilience in the portion of the Aral Sea basin that is located in Kazakhstan, and it will also restore an important ecosystem that is located around the North Aral Sea. It is expected that this will have a beneficial influence on the ecosystem outside the project region.

In 2018, one of the last bilateral projects between the EU and Kazakhstan, which aimed to promote

Kazakhstan's transition to a green economy, was completed successfully. Additionally, Kazakhstan is qualified to receive benefits from the Technical Assistance and Information Exchange (TAIEX) programme that is supported under the partnership instrument (EU-Kazakhstan relations factsheet).

Results and discussion

The former PCA has been replaced with the latest EPCA for Kazakhstan. This agreement serves as the essential basis for the EU-Kazakhstan bilateral cooperation, and it expresses the EU's documented and legal stance with regard to the area. The purpose of manually tracing the word frequency required each document to be manually downloaded from the official website of the European Council and printed.

According to the both texts' content analysis, one of the most frequent words in the 1995 Partnership Cooperation Agreement is «cooperation,» which appears 140 times. The following most often appeared words are “development” with the amount of 54 times repetition, “companies” with 53 times appearance, “economic” with 46 times appearance, legislation with 40 times appearance and trade with 35 times appearance. In result, we may interpret that, perhaps, economic and trade spheres of bilateral cooperation were the most close between the EU and Kazakhstan in 1990s, since they are in the list of top 20 repeating words, see the Table 1 below. We also insist the content analysis shows that the wording of the agreement is consistent with EU goals to eliminate economic and social inequities between Kazakhstan and the EU via the PCA's preamble, which acknowledges EU aid in the growth and restructuring of the Kazakh economy (European External Action Service, 1995) as the words “development” and “legislation” also appear very often.

Table 1 – Top 20 frequent words in the PCA between the EU and Kazakhstan (authors' elaboration)

No	Word	Time of Repetition
1	2	3
1	Article	172
2	Republic	142
3	Community	140
4	States	140
5	<i>Cooperation</i>	<i>140</i>
6	Kazakhstan	130
7	Provisions	56
8	Development	54

1	2	3
9	Companies	53
10	Communities	50
11	Services	49
12	Economic	46
13	Customs	40
14	Legislation	40
15	Council	38
16	Protection	38
17	Trade	35
18	Authority	34
19	Conditions	34
20	Measures	33

According to the results of a content analysis done on the EU-Kazakhstan EPCA in 2015, one of the phrases that occur most often in the agreement is “cooperation”. Moreover, there are words such as “rights”, “goods”, “trade”, “energy”, “law” among the most frequent. Consequently, there are several fields of cooperation between the EU

and Kazakhstan, which are particularly in their focus. We, perhaps, may relate here normative aspect, since the words “rights” and “law” appear often in the EPCA document. Furthermore, the economic and energy vectors stay in the priority, since those words are in the top 20 list, see the Table 2 below.

Table 2 – Top 20 frequent words in the 2015 EPCA between the EU and Kazakhstan (authors’ elaboration)

No	Word	Time of Repetition
1	Union	358
2	<i>Cooperation</i>	320
3	Republic	260
4	Kazakhstan	237
5	Chapter	210
6	Services	200
7	Arbitration	196
8	International	140
9	Rights	138
10	Goods	137
11	Trade	135
12	Protection	131
13	Energy	102
14	Law	101
15	Paragraph	100
16	Part	100
17	Public	99
18	Development	95
19	Suppliers	91
20	Procedure	90

In result, we can conclude that the above document analysis has illustrated both differences and similarities in the priorities of the PCA and EPCA between the EU and Kazakhstan. Common word, such as “cooperation” is found in both agreements. Based on that result, we underline the

mutual cooperation is in the targets of high priority for both sides. Moreover, the trade stays to be a key field of cooperation in both documents.

In addition, the words “companies”, “economic” “legislation”, “trade” are in the list of 20 the most frequently used words in the text of PCA. Obviously,

the spheres of cooperation were enhanced towards normative agenda in the recent agreement in comparison with PCA text. There are the most frequently used amount of words, such as “rights”, “goods”, “trade”, “energy”, “law” in the EPCA text.

Conclusion

The first purpose of this research was to investigate how the EU priorities in the texts of the PCA and EPCA for Kazakhstan have evolved over time. The findings of the PCA and EPCA content analysis were applied using a manually completed empirical technique.

The second purpose of this essay was to address the absence of empirical research on the EU legal basis for the Republic of Kazakhstan. This study aimed to address a research gap by using an empirical methodological technique to investigate the EU’s involvement with Kazakhstan.

During the content analysis of the texts of the PCA and the EPCA we found out 140 and 358 times repetition of the word “cooperation” respectively in both documents. We insist those results show the importance of strengthening cooperation for both sides. However, it is obvious, the main focus of cooperation have been switched slightly during the time. In PCA, there are words such as “development”, “companies”, “economic” “legislation”, “trade” as the most frequent. But, “rights”, “goods”, “trade”, “energy”, “law” are the words in the EPCA mostly appeared. Trade sector stays to be a priority in

both cases. Furthermore, it is worth to mention, the evidence of the word “right” in the EPCA text. We claim, the EU has an enhanced accent on its normative agenda for Kazakhstan to support human rights, since the word “rights” appears quite often in the recent agreement.

Thus, on the contrary the word “energy” is not in the top ten list of the most frequently words in the text of the PCA, and is included to the EPCA’s list of regularly used words. Furthermore, the EU favored economic and trade cooperation, as these words come up more regularly in the PCA.

Overall, the content analysis findings enabled us to evaluate the hypothesis of whether the EU’s cooperation with the Republic of Kazakhstan shifted the emphasis of bilateral ties. We partially accept the tested hypothesis, since the EU slightly switched the priority for Kazakhstan, since the trade stays to be a key field of cooperation in both documents. We have to partially accept our hypothesis on that, since the EU does more accents on human rights agenda in the EPCA.

It is possible that diplomats from countries in the European Union and Central Asia would be especially interested in this sort of research. Regarding the European Union’s stance in Central Asia, as well as the political, economic, security, and normative duties of each country in the area, there has to be further academic debate. Due to a paucity of analysis on the subject in general as well as a lack of material provided by academics, we generally call for greater research to be conducted on the linkages that exist between the EU and Central Asia.

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