

Aydın G.

Assistant Professor of International Relations,
Department of International Relations, Ataturk University,
Turkey, Erzurum, e-mail: gulsenaydin@atauni.edu.tr

COOPERATION OF THE EU AND KAZAKHSTAN ON CIVIL SOCIETY DEVELOPMENT IN KAZAKHSTAN

Development of civil society is considered to be one of the crucial pillars of post-Communist democratization. The European Union (EU) devotes remarkable attention and effort to civil society development. This study aims to shed light on the cooperation of the EU and Kazakhstan on civil society development in Kazakhstan. To this end, first the methodology of the study is clarified. Second, the historical background of civil society development in Kazakhstan is addressed. Third, the phases of post-Soviet civil society development are explored. Fourth, EU's cooperation with the government and civil society actors is analyzed. As a conclusion, the study discusses that although the cooperation between Kazakhstan and the EU in the area of civil society development in Kazakhstan is marred with difficulties and failed to bring about significant advance so far, cooperation needs to be sustained. Kazakhstan is willing to carry out reform within the contours of its national interest and stability. Astana prioritizes state building and stability over democratization. Kazakhstan is also careful about keeping delicate balances in its multi-vector foreign policy. The EU has acted in line with the preferences of Kazakhstan so far by implementing a developmental approach rather than a political one. The developmental approach of the EU is expected to deliver the desired results slowly. The post-Soviet generation of Kazakhstan is much more devoted to change compared to the generation in administration now. The change will gain momentum when the new generation fills important positions in the important positions in administration.

Key words: Kazakhstan, the European Union, Civil Society, Democratization, Stability.

Айдын Г.

Халықаралық қатынастар кафедрасының доценті,
Ататүрік университетінің халықаралық қатынастар факультеті,
Түркия, Ерзүрум қ., e-mail: gulsenaydin@atauni.edu.tr

Қазақстандағы азаматтық қоғамды дамыту бағытындағы Еуропалық Одақ пен Қазақстан Республикасының ынтымақтастығы

Азаматтық қоғамды қалыптастыру және оны дамыту посткоммунистік демократизацияның негізгі көрсеткіші екендігі анық. Еуропалық Одақ азаматтық қоғам құру саласында көптеген қызметтер атқарып келеді. Бұл мақалада Қазақстан Республикасы мен Еуропалық Одақ арасындағы қарым-қатынастар Қазақстандағы азаматтық қоғам мәселесін зерттеуге бағытталған. Осы мақсатта алдымен зерттеудің әдістемелік негіздері анықталады. Екіншіден, Қазақстандағы азаматтық қоғамның қалыптасу тарихы қарастырылады. Үшіншіден, посткеңестік кезеңдегі азаматтық қоғамның дамуы сарапталса, төртіншіден, ЕО-ның азаматтық қоғам қалыптастыру барысындағы үкіметтік құрылымдар мен жекелеген қауымдастықтармен байланыстары сипатталады. Қорытынды бөлімде, Қазақстанда азаматтық қоғамның даму барысында қиындықтар мен кедергілердің бар екендігіне қарамастан, ЕО мен ҚР арасындағы осы салаға қатысты ынтымақтастықты ары қарай да белсенді түрде жалғастыру керектігі айтылады. Қазақстан Республикасы өзінің ұлттық мүдделері мен тұрақтылықты сақтау үшін азаматтық қоғамды дамытуда реформалар жасауға дайын екендігін көрсете білді. Сонымен қатар, Қазақстан өзінің көпвекторлы сыртқы саясатындағы тепе-теңдіктің сақталуына да аса қатты мән береді. ЕО Қазақстанның ұлттық мүдделерінің сақталуына мән бере отырып, Қазақстандағы

азаматтық қоғамды дамытуға атсалысып келеді. Бірақ бұл даму бағытымен азаматтық қоғамның күтілетін нәтижесіне жетуге ұзақ уақыт керек етеді. Жаңа буын өкілдері Қазақстандағы маңызды мемлекеттік билікке қол жеткізгенде бұл мәселенің шешілуі қажетті қарқын алады.

Түйін сөздер: Қазақстан, Еуропалық Одақ, Азаматтық қоғам, Демократизация, Тұрақтылық.

Айдын Г.

доцент кафедры международных отношений
факультета международных отношений, Университет имени Ататюрка,
Турция, г. Эрзурум, e-mail: gulsenaydin@atauni.edu.tr

Сотрудничество ЕС и Казахстана в области развития гражданского общества в Казахстане

Развитие гражданского общества считается одним из важнейших показателей посткоммунистической демократизации. Европейский Союз уделяет большое внимание развитию гражданского общества. Это исследование направлено на сотрудничество ЕС и Казахстана в области развития гражданского общества в Казахстане. С этой целью сначала выясняется методология исследования, рассматривается история развития гражданского общества в Казахстане, исследуются этапы развития постсоветского гражданского общества, анализируется сотрудничество ЕС с правительством и субъектами гражданского общества. В заключение, в исследовании говорится, что, хотя сотрудничество Казахстана и ЕС в области развития гражданского общества в Казахстане омрачено трудностями и пока не достигло значительного прогресса, необходимо поддерживать сотрудничество. Казахстан готов к проведению реформы в рамках своих национальных интересов и стабильности. Астана уделяет приоритетное внимание государственному строительству и стабильности в области демократизации. Казахстан также бережно относится к сохранению тонких балансов в своей многовекторной внешней политике. ЕС действовал в соответствии с предпочтениями Казахстана, применяя дружественный подход к развитию, а не политический. Ожидается, что подход к развитию в ЕС будет давать желаемые результаты медленно.

Ключевые слова: Казахстан, Европейский Союз, гражданское общество, демократизация, стабильность.

Introduction

This study aims to shed light on the cooperation of the European Union and Kazakhstan on civil society development in Kazakhstan. Kazakhstan is chosen as the case to be focused on due to its importance. Kazakhstan has rich oil and natural gas resources, which carries it to the limelight in global politics. Given the importance of fossil fuels for world powers and the competition over the use and transfer of these resources, it is wise to focus on Kazakhstan in post-communist studies. Kazakhstan is also vying for regional and global influence. Since independence Astana proved to be effective in keeping the delicate international balances in its region, even in the world. Rather than opting for isolation and resistance to post-communist reform, Kazakhstan adopts a multi-vector foreign policy, seeks to improve in international settings including the platforms provided by international organizations and seems willing to carry out reform within the contours of its national interest and stability.

Civil society is widely regarded to be a key factor in the fall of the communist regimes in former

the Soviet Union and Eastern and Central Europe. It is also considered to be one of the crucial pillars of post-communist democratization. The EU, whose role in the post-communist space has improved significantly beginning with 1990's, devotes remarkable attention and effort to the issue of civil society development in the region in a way different from other influential actors such Russia and China.

The EU's activities in this area necessitate the focus on three groups of questions. First, what kind of a methodological trajectory is required to examine and make sense of post-Soviet civil society development in Kazakhstan and EU's activities to this end? Second, what is the nature of EU's activities? What kinds of strategies were employed by various actors for ensuring the development of civil society institutions in post-communist space since the fall of communism in the region? Which group of strategy conforms to the strategies of the EU in the issue area? Has the civil society development policy of the EU evolved through time? Third, what kinds of results have been produced by the EU activity? Can EU be considered as successful in its effort to improve civil society in Kazakhstan in the post-Soviet setting? Has the EU taken the

peculiarities of Kazakhstani case while formulating policies towards this country?

All of these questions will be addressed in different sections of this study. The following section is devoted to discussing the methodology to be applied in this study together with the reasons behind choosing this methodology. Afterward, the discussion section applies the methodology to the issue of cooperation of the EU and Kazakhstan on civil society development in Kazakhstan. After the discussion, the results reached through the application of the methodology to the case will be brought under scrutiny. The conclusion will summarize the findings of the study and provide a general assessment besides offering guidelines for future research on the issue. After this brief introduction, the discussion now turns to the methodological issues.

Methodology

This study carries out a case study. The wider framework of the study comprises both post-Soviet political change and involvement of the EU in post-Soviet space beginning with the 1990's. In this broad context, the case to be focused on is cooperation of the EU and Kazakhstan on civil society development in Kazakhstan.

While carrying out the case study, the approach of an outstanding theorist of post-Soviet political change, Thomas Carothers, will be utilized. In his seminal article (quoted 3400 times so far), Carothers questioned what he called the 'Transition Paradigm'. This paradigm came to be embraced by the US democracy-promotion community starting with the 1980s. To some extent, the transition paradigm has been helpful in accounting for the changes took place some parts of the world at that period. But, as Carothers points out writing in 2002, it is obvious that reality in many places of the world does not correspond the model (Carothers, 2002:6). The post-Soviet space is a point in the case. The main problem with this paradigm was that it assumed that countries moving away from authoritarianism are destined to adopt democracy. However, many countries including the post-Soviet countries like Kazakhstan tended to move towards a different form of authoritarianism after independence. As another setback, this paradigm set a uniform pattern for countries experiencing change. However, in reality, the trajectory of political change in each country followed somewhat a unique path shaped by the history, political culture, ethnic composition, and international landscape of the country in question.

This study closely follows the guidelines provided by Carothers in its methodology. While focusing on the development of the civil society in Kazakhstan in the post-Soviet period, the study will employ an approach that recognizes the distinctiveness of Kazakh case. It will be emphasized that case of Kazakhstan is not only quite different from the Western democracies but also from other countries in post-Communist space. The discussion on Kazakh history and political culture at the beginning of the next section, however quite brief, arises from this understanding. In the remainder of the study, a special attention will be devoted to examining how Kazakh history and political culture have functioned to shape the distinct political trajectory that Kazakhstan has followed after independence.

As mentioned, there is also a second broad framework of this study: the involvement of the EU in the post-Soviet space beginning with the 1990's. To make sense of this framework, a brief discussion on the evolution of the EU's engagement in Central Asia will be provided. Then the study will move on to a narrower focus: how has the EU cooperated with Kazakhstan to ensure the development of civil society in the country so far? At this point, the principles that Carothers put forward in another study will be instrumental. As he writes, over the years, due to the diversity of characteristics of recipient countries of democratic assistance, the earlier one-size-fits-all approach has been given up. Instead of it, today democratic assistance is adjusted according to the needs and conditions of specific countries (Carothers 2009: 5). In the light of this guideline, the study will focus on how the EU forms the democratic assistance given to Kazakhstan on the basis of the specifics of this country.

The resources utilized in this study are mainly secondary resources: articles, books, reports, and news. As another resource, the writer's observations during her visit to Almaty in April 2018 are also used.

Discussion and Results

Before focusing on the role of EU in the development of civil society in Kazakhstan it is necessary to emphasize that emergence of civil society in Kazakhstan predates the involvement of the EU in the issue for sure. Moreover, development of civil society is highly conditioned by political culture prevailing in the country. Therefore, this section first provides an examination of the political culture in Kazakhstan and historical background of the development of civil society in the country.

A traditional understanding of state prevailed in pre-Soviet Kazakhstan. To put in other words, the political setting was shaped by customs and family and lineage-related networks. A complex set of traditional social norms regulated political conduct and communal relations. In this setting, there was no room for the emergence of civil society. Most members of the traditional society living on animal husbandry were so engaged in subsistence living that they tended to ignore politics (Kangas, 1995: 273). Moreover, nomadic culture and life-style have also deeply affected the customs and mind-set of the Kazakh society. The nomadic way of thinking is marked by religious tolerance, high level of collectivism, flexibility, esteem for elderly, and ability to adjust to a repeatedly changing nature (Nezhina and Ibrayeva, 2013: 338).

Tsarist Russia's first incursion into Central Asia was ended in defeat in Khiva in 1717 but its advance gained momentum 150 years later. Under the command of General Konstantin Kaufman Russia gained the control of Khiva in 1873 and established its long-lasting rule over Central Asia (Ruffin, 2011:6). Three tribal and nomadic hordes or juz- the Great, Middle and Little hordes with their regional bases- proved to be the most important division in the Kazakh society then (Giffen et. al., 2005: 56). Although Tsarist Russian rule was assumed to eliminate such divisions between 1822 and 1845 (Roy, 2000: 23), these are still alive in post-Soviet Kazakhstan. When the writer of this study asked the Kazakh people whom she met during an academic visit to Kazakhstan in April 2018 about their horde origins, all of them seem well informed about the horde they are descended from. As Oliver Roy points out that tribes and hordes function as forms of group solidarity among Kazakhs and tribal origin plays a significant role in the society and political life, at least in rural areas (2000: 23) Leaders linked with long-established clans structures have come to possess important positions political and business establishments in post-Soviet period (Dissonova et al. 2002: 16).

Soviet rule entrenched the horde divisions in the Kazakh society but it has a lot of other wide-ranging effects, too. Starting with Lenin, various policies, including eradication of Islamic schools, courts and mosques, the shift to the Cyrillic alphabet, were employed to deeply transform Central Asia. Industrialization and urbanization, the system of collective farms, mass compulsory education were other tools of the Soviet rule (Ruffin, 2011:7). For the nomadic population of Kazakhstan, the imposition of the Soviet rule also meant forced adoption of sedentary life.

The Soviet rule also introduced a plethora of public associations- The Pioneers' League (children and teenagers), Leninist Young Communist League (Komsomol), the Soviet Women's Committee, the Professional Associations, or Scientific and Technical Associations, to name a few- to Central Asia. These were quite different from the civil society organizations in the West as they were generally formed at the suggestion of the state or the Communist Party and financed by the state. A sort of compulsory volunteerism also marked the activities in Soviet public or collective life. Trade Unions were another type of public organizations under state control. By the beginning of 1940's relatively independent trade unions came under state control. Afterward, they were assigned roles in the implementation of decisions taken by the Communist Party. As a result, their initial mission of protecting workers rights vanished (Giffen et. al., 2005: 56).

Civil society organizations, which were independent of state control, were to emerge only with glasnost. In 1986, a new law on associations and interest-based clubs was enacted, bringing about the formation of discussion clubs and movements in line with glasnost and perestroika (Asian Development Bank, 2015: 2). Some of the civil society organizations still functioning today come out of dissident movements emerged thanks to glasnost (openness, liberalization) and perestroika (economic restructuring) policies introduced by Gorbachev period (Matveeva, 2008: 4).

Environmental movements proved to be the first independent organizations to appear across the Soviet Union as a result of the lessening of state control. They were also the strongest of the informal organizations emerging during this period. Their efforts brought about improvements in the environment as well as the emergence of real voluntary citizen activity. In Central Asian countries including Kazakhstan, environmental organizations provided the first democratic platforms to raise citizens' demands (Watters, 1999: 85). Seeing that environmental activities were considered as less problematic than obviously political matters by authorities, activists found the opportunity to intensify their activities as environmental problems resulting from Soviet policies became more publicized thanks to glasnost. While working on the environmental issues, activists came to appreciate the importance of fundamental human rights such as freedom of speech and the right to organize (Watters, 1999: 85). In this period, Kazakhstan also experienced the emergence of political groups

such as Adilet (Justice) and Azat (Independent), which challenged the totalitarianism and demanded democratization of the society (Knox & Yessimova, 2015:304).

In Kazakhstan, environmental activism focused on nuclear testing in Semipalatinsk former nuclear base in the country. After an accident in the base in February 1989, the Kazakh poet Olzhas Suleimenov formed and led Nevada- Semipalatinsk anti-nuclear movement in Kazakhstan. The members of the movement gathered thousands of signatures and organized protest marches in various cities demanding an end to nuclear testing (Luong, and Weinthal, 1999: 1268-1269). In fact, this was not the first time that Kazakhs organized demonstrations to protest against Soviet policies. In December 1986, Kazaks protested against Moscow's order to replace the first secretary of Kazakhstan's Communist Party, Kunayev, a native Kazakh, with Kolbin, an ethnic Russian. In the course of the events, which are called *Almaty or Jeltoksan (December) Events*, several people died and several hundreds were injured as they clashed with the security forces (Abazov, 1999: 70). Therefore, it is necessary to state that Kazakhstan was distinguished among the former Soviet republics of Central Asia by the virtue of its resolute and bold stance against Soviet policies regarded unfair. Such kind of protests against Soviet authorities was not observed in other Central Asian republics.

As discussed in the methodology section above, the studies on post-communist democratization process, in general, and civil society building, in particular, need to take the distinctiveness of countries under examination into account while carrying out research. They have to move away from using pure and poor Western conceptualizations. Otherwise, they risk missing a well-placed understanding of real dynamics of post-Communist change. Civil society development is a point in the case. If one applies Western definitions of civil society to Kazakhstan, he/she will arrive at the conclusion that civil society does not exist in the country (Dissonova et al. 2002: 21). There is a need for adopting a revised definition. At the center of this revised definition is the recognition that the conceptualization of post-Soviet civil society has to include an all-encompassing definition of civil society including the state-controlled sphere as well as the one independent of the state control. If an autonomous civil society exists in an authoritarian system at all, it exists in the mode of small factions of citizen activism or dissent. A larger part of the civil society encompasses a range of institutions

and organizations under different degrees of state control. This larger part of the civil society forms the basis for the potential independent civil society to emerge in the future (Skovajsa, 2008: 48).

Whereas the first narrow conceptualization has been called as 'neo-liberal' or 'mainstream' approach, the broader one has been referred as 'alternative' in the literature. The alternative approach adopts a broader definition of civil society that comprises traditional and communal civil society. It approaches civil society as a means to an end. In this understanding civil society lays the ground for future change through people's participation and empowerment (Giffen et al., 2005:7).

It is worth noting that, as a post-communist country, Kazakhstan inherited an extensive and solidly structured associational sphere comprising professional associations and organizations representing a variety of groups and interests including young people, women, and ecologists (Ekiert & Kubik, 2014: 46). The historical background of this associational sphere has been discussed in the introduction. Employing the broader or alternative approach to the conceptualization of civil society, this study argues that post-Soviet civil society in Kazakhstan is built on this ground.

Today, Kazakhstan symbolizes a distinct Central Asian form of civil society, similar to Russia and Caucasus but quite different from that found in both Eastern and Western Europe. It is different in the sense that in Kazakhstan civil society is less willing to challenge the state, more supportive of the authoritarian system, and cautious about the danger of civic activism to degenerate into instability. The Kazakh state dominates civil society less deeply than the state does in Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan or Belarus. However, civil society in Kazakhstan is quite weaker than in the Baltic region or Ukraine (Ziegler, 2010: 795-796). Since independence, the state and civil society have cooperated mainly in three areas: the creation of a positive legal environment to encourage civil society development and growth; public participation; and financial support of civil society organizations' social activities by the state (Ovcharenko, 2004: 25-26).

The development of civil society in Kazakhstan can be examined in four phases (Bhuiyan & Amagoh, 2011: 32):

- first phase: late 1980's-1993,
- second phase: 1994-1997,
- third phase: 1998-2002,
- fourth phase: since 2003

Having already discussed the first phase, it is appropriate to start with the second phase. During

this phase, in 1996, the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan «On Public Associations» was enacted and the number of independent NGO's increased significantly. International organizations, including USAID, UNDP, Soros Foundation, TACIS, Eurasia Foundation, INTRAC provided funding and training to NGO's. The most dynamic NGOs of this period were Kazakhstan International Bureau for Human Rights, Interlegal Foundation, Almaty Helsinki Committee, Feminist League, Green Salvation, EcoCenter, and Association of Young Leaders. In the third phase between 1998-2002, NGO's started to face difficulties due to the new restrictive registration requirements and budget cuts resulting from slowing economic growth and declining foreign grants. As a result, the number of NGO's shrunk. At this last phase, the cooperation between the state and civil society institutions increased. The adoption of the Conception of Government Support of NGOs in 2003 proved to be a key step for the development of cooperation between the government and NGOs. In 2006, the Concept of Civil Society Development in Kazakhstan for 2006-2011 was accepted. It aimed the improvement of the legislative, social, economic and organizational conditions to ensure civil society development (Bhuiyan & Amagoh, 2011: 32-34). As another important key step, the Ministry for Religious Affairs and Civil Society was established on September 13, 2016. This new ministry is responsible for coordinating the state's relations with religious and civil society organization besides youth policy (Kazinform, 2016)

A general examination of the civil society in Kazakhstan reveals its strengths as well as the weaknesses. As for the strengths, Kazakh civil society has a relatively well-developed legal framework (Asian Development Bank, 2015). Civil society organizations are by and large open to communication with each other, networking and exchanging information. Religious tolerance, tolerance in inter-ethnic relations, non-violence, and equal opportunities for men and women are assets to the development of civil society. Founding a civil society in the country is relatively easy and cheap. Coming to the weaknesses, in Kazakh society whereas political engagement is low, political apathy is high. In the political system, competitiveness is quite low. State authorities can interfere with civil society organizations and treat them unequally. Citizens do not trust civil society institutions and view them largely as sources of financial benefits. The government is not sensitive to the proposals and initiatives of civil society (Makhmutova & Akhmetova 2011:48-50).

While foreign experts view authoritarian system and the lack of initiative on the part of NGO leaders as the major hurdles for the development of civil society, the local experts emphasize that local culture, which has been shaped by the remote history of the nomadic life and more recent past of broad state control over proto civil society institutions act as a more important stumbling block. Kazakh society is deeply collectivist and heavily relies on tradition of mutual support provided by family and community members. In Kazakhstan, power distance is high meaning that power is centralized and citizens accept unequal distribution of power as they assume that they are dependent on their leaders. It is not easy to access to the government. Moreover, Kazakh society is collectivist rather than being individualist. People are incorporated into informal groups with their birth. These groups offer protection in turn of the loyalty of their members (Nezhina and Ibrayeva, 2013: 341). It has been argued that the dominance of cooperation rather than contestation in state-civil society relations can be only partially attributed to suppression and cooptation by the state. Kazakh political culture, which views contestation destabilizing, also accounts for this situation (Ziegler, 2010:796).

In the last two decades, two approaches have shaped democracy assistance including the development of civil society institutions in targeted countries: political approach and developmental approach. The political approach is built on a rigid understanding of democratization with its focus on elections and political freedoms. Democracy assistance centers on elections, political parties, and civil society groups and seeks to strengthen democrats at the expense of non-democratic forces in recipient authoritarian countries. The developmental method approaches democratization as a broader process entailing equality, justice and, socio-economic changes. In this approach, democratization is not only related to the free and fair elections but also to a broader societal transformation comprising state- and nation-building above all. Democracy assistance is taken as an incremental and continuous process. In this process, state building is given priority over any kind of reforms in countries' political system (Carothers 2009: 5).

Taken as a whole, the EU's democracy assistance for Central Asian countries including Kazakhstan has been conducted on the basis of a developmental approach (Norling & Cornell 2016:23). Some elements of political approach can also be found in the EU's democracy assistance for Central Asia but an examination of main features shows that developmental approach clearly dominates. The

EU focuses on enhancing the capacity of state institutions, strengthening the role of civil society in the field of local service delivery and development projects, and social and economic rights besides political and civil rights. Moreover, it tends to avoid being politically demanding. It emphasizes the importance of collaboration, even with authoritarian governments (Carothers, 2009: 16). This approach of the EU seems to be in conformity with what Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev's attitude towards the issue. For Nazarbayev politics comes after the economy. He argues that it is not wise to be stuck in the transition to democracy. He emphasizes that, in a short span of time, Kazakhstan has managed to establish a modern capitalist state, which prepares the ground for civil society. (The Astana Times, 2013) Since independence, Nazarbayev confronts his critics by highlighting the successes of his young republic and the need for a strong leader to ensure stability and prevent fragmentation (Kubicek, 1998: 35).

Having faced with the reality of state control over civil society organizations in Kazakhstan as in other countries of Central Asia, the EU has adjusted its civil society assistance policy on the basis of the specifics of the country. It can be argued that this kind of a policy contradicts the EU's endeavor to enhance accountability by strengthening independent civil society institutions; however, the pragmatic policy of should not be easily discarded. It is not incorrect to support state-controlled societal groups or organizations as long as they represent the interest of the different segments of the society (Axyonova & Bossuyt, 2016: 215).

In 1990's, the EU opted for keeping a low profile in Central Asia. This distant and relatively stable region did not attract as much attention as the Western Commonwealth of Independent States did (Delcour, 2016: 92) Between the early 1990's and the early 2000s, the EU provided development assistance to Central Asian countries within the framework of its Technical Assistance to the Commonwealth of Independent States (TACIS) scheme and Institution Building and Partnership Program (IBPP). As illustrated by the modest budget (the average annual per capita support was approximately € 4) devoted to the region between 1995 and 2002, at that period EU's involvement in Central Asia was quite limited. A major shift came with the replacement of TACIS program with the Development and Cooperation Instrument (DCI), which allocated € 314 million to the region for the period 2007-2010 (Pierobon, 2016, 11).

Moreover, in order to bolster its position in Central Asia, the EU formulated the Partnership

and Cooperation Agreements (PCAs) at the end of 1990's. These agreements have aimed at increasing the EU's visibility in Central Asia by offering regular annual forums for relations between the EU and the Central Asian states. Within the framework of these regular meetings, the EU differentiated between promising states (Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan) and the problematic ones (Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan). In spite of this, on the whole, the PCAs showed that the EU did not plan to play the same role in Central Asia as it did in other post-Communist countries located in Central and Eastern Europe or the Baltic region. This situation underlined the ambivalent role of the EU in Central Asia once more (Kavalski & Cho, 2018: 56).

However, as far as the field of civil society development is concerned, EU has embarked on a well targeted policy from 2007 onwards. The EU has directly supported civil society organizations in Kazakhstan through two assistance schemes: the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) and the Non-State Actors and Local Authorities in Development (NSA/LA) program. While the EIDHR merely concentrates on civil society actors and the implementation of human rights-related projects, NSA/LA program dwells on fostering local participation in the development process. NSA/LA is also open to local authorities (Pierobon, 2016, 11).

It is necessary to explore the results of the EU's efforts to contribute to the development of civil society in Kazakhstan before the conclusion. As regards for civil society level, the organizations that were endowed with grants from the EU managed to forge sustainable relationships with other NGOs that were involved in the projects as partners to the degree that generally the cooperation was maintained even after the grant had ended. However, these funds also have had a negative impact on the relations among civil society institutions by increasing competition among them to be eligible for grants. The situation is more complicated at the governmental level. At the governmental level, although a number of consultation mechanisms were formed, civil society actors still prefer to use informal networks and personal contacts to campaign for their causes (Pierobon, 2016, 11).

Conclusion

In Kazakhstan civil society is quite different from those in other parts of the world. The third sector in the Western and Eastern Europe are quite different from the one in Kazakhstan. Kazakh civil society tends to cooperate with the state rather than challenging it. Over

the years since independence, the cooperation between civil society and the state came to be regulated by laws, coordinated by state organs and financed by state funds. Kazakhstan's ruling elite does not favor a fast and ambitious democratization. Economic development and stability are clearly given priority over democratization.

Taken as a whole, the EU's democracy assistance for Central Asian countries including Kazakhstan has been conducted on the basis of a developmental approach. Although the EU's policies in this field are criticized as being too vague and too unpromising, one must not discard them easily. In its civil society policy development towards Kazakhstan, the EU opted for taking the sensitivities of Kazakh ruling elite into account. Rather than being too politically

demanding and ambitious, the EU has so far emphasized small improvements. In Kazakhstan, as in the rest of Central Asia, the EU focuses on good governance and building the capacities of state institutions rather than urging democratization.

This is a wise policy and it is in the interest of Kazakhstan. Many people had feared that due to its large Russian population Kazakhstan would face instability after the collapse of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). However, due to his meticulous policies, Nazarbayev managed to keep the delicate balances both in his country and in relations with Russia so far. As the EU has also proved to be careful not to push too far and disturb the balances, its cautious policies deserve respect.

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