U.S. - Kazakhstan Relations: Timeline and Brief Historical Context

This report is prepared in order to summarize the relations, give a brief political history by examining key actors and events between the United States of America and Kazakhstan. References and disclaimer are settled at the end of the report.

Threat Reduction Cooperation (1991-2008)

Between 1991 and 1996, the United States plays a key role in assisting Kazakhstan in getting rid of its strategic nuclear weapons stockpile and dismantling its nuclear weapons infrastructure through Nunn-Lugar Comprehensive Threat Reduction (CTR) assistance. Kazakhstan, with the cooperation of the U.S., signed several treaties on the purpose of preventing proliferation of nuclear weapons and usage of chemical weapons.

1991 – Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the United States becomes the first country to recognize Kazakhstan’s independence.

1992 – The United States opens its Embassy in Almaty and then relocates in 2006 to Astana (renamed Nur-Sultan in 2019).

1993 – The U.S. oil company, Chevron, becomes the first major investor in Kazakhstan with the establishment of the TengizChevroil joint venture.

1994 – Kazakhstan transfers more than a half-tonne of weapons-grade uranium to the United States.


1996 – Kazakhstan renounces its nuclear weapons and closes the Semipalatinsk Test Site (STS).

1997 – Kazakhstan signs the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and the Chemical Weapons Convention.

1995 – Kazakhstan removes its last nuclear warheads.


2000 – With U.S. assistance, Kazakhstan completes the sealing of 181 nuclear test tunnels at the STS.

2001 – Cooperation is strengthened after the 9/11 attacks as the United States seeks strategic partners near Afghanistan, and later near Iraq, nations whose governments aided and abetted terrorism in both Kazakhstan and the United States.

– Kazakhstan and the United States establish the U.S.-Kazakhstan Energy Partnership.

– Kazakhstan signs the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty.

2006 – Kazakhstan works closely with Washington to advance non-proliferation further. Kazakhstan joins with its Central Asian neighbors Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan to affirm that the entire region would forever be a nuclear weapons free zone.

2008 – In the time period between 1992 and 2008, cumulative CTR assistance to Kazakhstan has culminated to $341 million.

**Strengthening Friendly Relations (2009-2017)**

Since Obama becomes the President of America, the US-Kazakhstan friendly relations become stronger and Kazakhstan takes part in many international organizations. In addition to nuclear security, bilateral and regional issues, and agreement upon “atomic energy” are now on the agenda of these states.

2010 – Presidents Nazarbayev and Obama discuss strengthening the strategic partnership between the United States and Kazakhstan and pledge to intensify bilateral cooperation to promote nuclear safety and non-proliferation, regional stability in Central Asia, economic prosperity, and universal values.

– Kazakhstan holds the chairmanship of the OSCE.

2012 – At the "2012 Seoul Nuclear Security Summit", Presidents Obama and Nazarbayev reaffirms bilateral cooperation in the areas of nuclear nonproliferation.

The Strategic Partnership Dialogue is a bilateral dialogue between Kazakhstan and the United States covering wide-ranging discussions on bilateral and regional issues. The first SPD is held in Washington.
2014 – Two-way trade between the United States and Kazakhstan reaches $2.4 billion.

2015 – Kazakhstan becomes a member of the World Trade Organization.
– Kazakhstan’s government concludes an agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency to host a low-enriched uranium bank.

2016 – Nursultan Nazabayev congratulates Donald Trump on his victory in the presidential election during their phone call.
– Kazakhstan and the USA marks the 25th anniversary of the Kazakhstan-U.S. relations. To that end, diplomatic missions of both countries launch celebratory events.

**Political Innovations (2017-Present)**

During the period when the political innovations from 2017 to the present day have stood out, the world is witnessing the

Tokayev era in Kazakhstan, and the Trump and then the Biden era in the USA.

Despite all these changes, US-Kazakh relations continue as friendly and healthy as before.

2017 – Donald Trump takes office as the 45th president of the United States of America.


2018 – In the years since Kazakhstan’s independence, the two countries develop a strong and wide-ranging bilateral relationship and agree on an enhanced strategic partnership at a summit.

2019 – Kassym-Jomart Tokayev takes office as the president of Kazakhstan, succeeding Nursultan Nazarbayev, who resigns after 29 years in office.

Kazakhstan becomes the 81st largest trading partner of the United States, with a total of $2 billion in two-way trade.

2020 – The U.S. Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo, visits Kazakhstan in February to reaffirm the importance of the Kazakhstan-U.S. strategic relationship. The visit focuses on trade and investment and ways to expand both nations’ prosperity.
Secretary Mike Pompeo and Foreign Minister Mukhtar Tileuberdi hold a joint news conference in Nur-Sultan. The sides note the importance of expanding the legislative and regulatory framework with new agreements, to further diversifying the economic partnership, and strengthening the interaction with the United States in the regional format.

Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev congratulates President-elect Joe Biden on his victory in the 2020 United States presidential elections.

2021 – The governments of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and the United States launch the Central Asia Investment Partnership under the umbrella of the C5+1 format, in order to promote private-sector growth and strengthen regional economic cooperation.

The partnership, launches on January 7, is “designed to raise at least $1 billion over the next five years to support private-sector growth” according to a joint statement by the three governments, in order to advance private sector-led projects.

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References


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