

# Kazakhstan-Japan Cooperation: The Role of Kazakh Diplomatic Institutions in the Formation of Bilateral Political Discourse

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## Abstract

At the present moment, publications on various aspects related to the formation and development of the Japanese foreign policy prevail in academic literature. Indeed, many scholars pay increased attention to the activities of the Japanese state agencies, as well as political agents, as key elements of modern Japanese diplomacy. At the same time, there is a significant gap associated with the activities of foreign diplomatic missions and diplomats in Japan. Examining the activities of foreign diplomatic entities in Tokyo allows readers to get a fresh look at how Japanese partners are building their relationship with Japan and what tools they used in order to achieve their primary goals. In this regard, the author uses constructivism, as well as desk research and discourse analysis to evaluate the activities of diplomatic missions in the formation of Japan's Central Asian vector, using the example of Kazakhstan's Foreign Ministry and its Embassy in Tokyo. In this paper, the author uses all available sources, including relevant legal acts, as well as numerous articles, speeches, and interviews by retired and acting Kazakh diplomats that were usually ignored by the academic society.

Key Words: Kazakhstan, Japan, Central Asia, Diplomacy, Embassy

## 1. Introduction

Stories about external relations of ancient Kazakh rulers (1465-1847) are well preserved in Russian, Chinese, and Persian written sources. For many scholars, such information is extremely valuable and helps to understand the historical roots of modern relations between Kazakhstan and three power centers, namely, Russia, China, and the Middle East. At the same time, there were countries with which the Kazakhs could not establish a direct contact. The modern history of Kazakh diplomacy is associated with two key milestones. First, during the existence of the Soviet Union (USSR), the Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic (SSR) had its Foreign Ministry (MFA) (since 13 Apr. 1944), which, unfortunately, could not fully participate in the decision-making process. As a result, for many years, the MFA had exclusively performed routine administrative and protocol functions<sup>1</sup>. Secondly, in 1991, after the USSR collapsed, Kazakhstan,

1 75 let NKID KazSSR: start, opredelivshiy budushcheye, MFA of Kazakhstan, <http://www.mfa.kz/ru/bern/content-view/75-let-nkid-kazssr-start-opredelivshij-budusee>. (Accessed: 05/12/2019).

as the “sovereign” state, gained a historic chance to set diverse foreign policy strategies. It is important to note that Kazakh political leaders were able to preserve the legacy of Kazakh Soviet diplomats, e.g. 1927-1932 USSR envoy to Saudi Arabia Mr. Nazir Turakulov, and incorporate some elements of their professional heritage into the diplomacy of modern Kazakhstan (Wahab 2016). This is a unique case when a country adopts professional experience of Soviet diplomats, but not their ideological beliefs. In fact, Kazakhstan is pulling them out of general context of the Soviet past, giving them a more ethnic character.

At the end of the 20th century, Kazakhstan and Japan, despite the geographical distance, got a chance to establish own model of bilateral relations (Rakhimov 2014:78). On its part, Japan could not neglect the fact that burial places of the Japanese prisoners of war (POW) were located in Central Asia (CA) because of the results of World War II. Today, these places became a part of the Japanese political discourse and its relations with the CA countries. For many Japanese politicians, these tombs have become a sort of pilgrimage site (Dadabaev 2016:11). It is clear only mutual interest encouraged the two countries to achieve the current level of “expanded strategic partnership”<sup>2</sup> (Nurgaliyeva 2015:365). At the same time, there were both active and passive phases in Kazakh-Japan relations. For instance, protracted political crisis in Japan in 2006-2012, which led to the replacement of six Prime Ministers (PMs) and two ruling administrations, i.e. three PMs from the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and three PMs from the Democratic Party (DPJ), had a significant influence on Japanese domestic and foreign strategies (Howe and Campbell 2013:99). After the first official visit of the PM of Japan to Kazakhstan, in Aug. 2006, there were only three visits by the Japanese Cabinet members to Kazakhstan in six years, including two visits by Ministers of Economy, Trade and Industry (2007, 2010), and one visit by the Foreign Minister (2010). Relations between the two countries continued to develop mainly due to 11 visits by high-ranking Kazakh officials to Japan<sup>3</sup>. This means the efforts of foreign policy institutions played a substantial role in maintaining and adapting bilateral relations to various unforeseen fluctuations. This also gives a reason to articulate about the presence of certain “social structures” that act as a framework for bilateral relations.

According to the 1961 Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, “diplomatic missions” perform five key functions, namely: representation, protection of state interests, negotiation, gathering information and promoting of friendly relations<sup>4</sup>. The fulfillment of these functions is impossible without the participation of specific agents, i.e. diplomats and embassies, as “basic structures”. To date, Japanese retired diplomats, i.e. Ambassador Kyoko Nakayama (Nakayama 2005), Amb. Akira Matsui (Matsui 2007), Amb. Toshio Tsunozaki (Tsunozaki 2007), Amb. Akio Kawato (Kawato 2008), and Professor Tomohiko Uyama (Uyama 2004, 2008, 2010, 2015), have published several comprehensive books about their experience of living and working in the CA countries. Indeed, these authors help to understand how

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2 The title of the joint statement by PM Abe of Japan and President Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan, which was adopted on 7 Nov. 2016 in Japan.

3 All information on bilateral visits could be seen on the Japanese MOFA website in “Japan-Kazakhstan Relations” section, <https://www.mofa.go.jp/region/europe/kazakhstan/data.html>. (Accessed: 03/12/2019).

4 The UN website, [https://legal.un.org/ilc/texts/instruments/english/conventions/9\\_1\\_1961.pdf](https://legal.un.org/ilc/texts/instruments/english/conventions/9_1_1961.pdf). (Accessed: 05/12/2019).

the image of Kazakhstan and its perception has been changing among Japanese officials, business and academic communities over two decades. Unfortunately, Kazakh diplomats have not yet published a single book, which poses certain difficulties for scholars when studying “the Japanese angle” of Kazakhstan’s foreign policy.

Constructivism assists in systematizing the existing discourses from all sources available for scholars, e.g. materials issued by Kazakh diplomats or diplomatic institutions in Japan. It also helps to understand what role they play in the formation of “Self” and “Others”. This framework is the most suitable because the majority of messages, addressed to the two states, go through various diplomatic channels, where the states themselves act as main idea generators. The author argues that Kazakh diplomats in Tokyo, as the country’s representatives, have been acting as “Half-Self” and “Half-Others” (the author would like to propose these two definitions for a better description of the situation)<sup>5</sup>, since they are forced to simultaneously demonstrate two separate identities. On one hand, they act as conductors of Kazakh national interests in Japan. On the other hand, they function as conductors of Japanese interests in Kazakhstan, because such behavior helps them to solve two different goals. First, they could interpret Japanese actions as the result of their direct/indirect manipulations, as well as to get political dividends for their support to the Japanese efforts in Kazakhstan, i.e. *quid pro quo*.

The main argument of the author is that the low status of Kazakhstan in the political discourse of Japan<sup>6</sup> forces one state (Kazakhstan) to influence political circles of another state (Japan) in order to achieve a desired level of cooperation through manipulations of local politicians and their foreign policy orienteer. Kazakhstan is trying to cope with this challenge by constructing two different relations: (1) “Self” vs. “Others”, i.e. appealing to various opposite characteristics such as differences in the country size, the availability of natural resources, the possession of sophisticated technologies, expertise, and human resources under the frequently used by the Kazakh side principle of “complementarity” (Mager 2016); (2) “Self” vs. “Self”, i.e. appealing to such similar characteristics as having similar distinct Asian appearance<sup>7</sup>, the similarity of historical destinies (e.g. parallels between Semipalatinsk and Hiroshima/Nagasaki) (Abe 2015), historical connection (e.g. POWs, including through the study of their heritage in Kazakhstan and more modern forms, i.e. theatre plays (Beisembina 2017)).

In this paper, the author poses the following questions: 1) What role do diplomatic agents play in the development of Kazakhstan-Japan relations? 2) What are the main features of their approaches and strategies? 3) What channels are used by the Kazakh side to exchange norms and lapping identities? In

5 In the author’s understanding, diplomatic institutions perform an important function, which, like a lens, allows them to project, reflect (“mirror”) and adjust the messages of both national and foreign leaders to their specifics respectively (Wendt 1992:406). In this process, they are forced not to balance, but to be able to reproduce two identities in the so-called “intermediate state”, which fits the description of “Half-Self” and “Half-Other”.

6 Prof. Shigeki Hakamada, personal communication on 27 Feb. 2018.

7 In 2015, during the visit of PM Shinzo Abe to CA, Kazakh politicians, including the President himself, often joked about the similarity of Kazakhs and Japanese during official meetings.

order to answer these questions, the author gradually reveals key aspects of the formation of the Kazakh diplomacy and its presence in Japan, including through the prism of Kazakh ambassadors and ordinary diplomats in Tokyo, as well as existing bilateral dialogue mechanisms (Wendt 1992:417).

## II. Basic Information

In Japanese sources, the readers can note various references to the historical trips of notable Japanese researchers to certain areas of Central Asia. In fact, these authors form the basis for Japanese modern interest to the region, which once played an important role in the functioning of the Great Silk Road<sup>8</sup>. A short time ago, Kazakh officials started to cite numerous archival reports about the interest of Kazakh scholars and politicians of the late 19th and early 20th centuries in Japan, including famous traveler and scholar Mr. Shokan Valikhanov (Akyn and Aitmagambetova 2012:27-29), leaders of Alash movement, e.g. Mr. Alikhan Bukeikhan, as well as poet Mr. Mukhtar Auezov (Auezov 2017). In many ways, such interest was related to the desire of people to follow a new model of state development, including the transformation of Kazakh territories into a “second Japan” to achieve the level of advanced nations (Khan Akkuly 2016).

During Soviet times, Kazakhstan was very far from obtaining direct contacts with Japan. At that time, many citizens fall victim to Stalin’s repressions; that included the charges of spying for Japan<sup>9</sup>. Later, together with the Red Army, they took part in the 1945 Soviet-Japanese war, which should have led to the establishing of a negative image of Japan. However, this did not happen (Suzuki 2013). In a broader sense, these actions or “experiences” became important in terms of understanding modern CA and its contemporary international relations (Kavalski 2010:4). The recognition of Kazakhstan’s independence and establishment of bilateral diplomatic relations in 1991-1992 became a starting point of modern Kazakh-Japan cooperation. Kazakh politicians and diplomats often recite the words of the pre-Soviet Kazakh *intelligentsia*, indicating them as the basis of traditional interest to Japan. On one hand, this can be considered as an excuse for a pleasant conversation, on the other, as a desire of the Kazakh authorities to build a historical closeness of the two nations, i.e. to adjust two identities. In this manner, it can be said that foundations of the structures of “human association” between Kazakhstan and Japan are partly determined by shared ideas, i.e. aspirations, and that the foundations of the identities and interests are constructed by these shared ideas (Wendt 1999:1).

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8 “Tsentralnoaziatskaya diplomatiya Yaponii”, Qazaqstan tarihy, <https://e-history.kz/ru/publications/view/4519>. (Accessed: 05/12/2019).

9 For example, in 1929, famous Kazakh poet Magzhan Zhumabaev was arrested on false charges of nationalism, espionage in favor of Japan and the creation of an underground group. “Magzhan Zhumabaev”, Tengrinews, <https://tengrinews.kz/tag/%D0%96%D1%83%D0%BC%D0%B0%D0%B1%D0%B0%D0%B5%D0%B2-%D0%9C%D0%B0%D0%B3%D0%B6%D0%B0%D0%BD/>. (Accessed: 05/12/2019).

In the 1990s, the diplomatic initiative belonged to the Japanese side. Diplomatic relations between the two countries were established on 26 Jan. 1992. A year later, on 20 Jan. 1993, the Japanese Embassy began its work in Kazakhstan. According to the Japanese Foreign Ministry (MOFA 2019), there are diplomatic missions of 155 countries and 39 international organizations (IOs) in Japan; honorary consulates of 96 countries operate in various Japanese regions. The Kazakh Embassy in Japan was opened four years later, in Feb. 1997. The corresponding Presidential Decree no. 3255 on the opening of Kazakhstan's embassies in Japan and several other countries, including Austria and Malaysia, was signed on 5 Dec. 1996 (Tengrinews 1996). It can be assumed that at the initial stage, Kazakhstan was satisfied with interaction through the Japanese offices in Kazakhstan and bilateral exchanges. This was a necessary measure due to the lack of sufficient financial and human resources in Kazakhstan in the early 1990s.

## 1. Diplomacy of Kazakhstan

According to a long-standing Foreign Minister of Kazakhstan, Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, who became the second President of Kazakhstan, in 2019, Soviet diplomacy did not fit the policy of independent Kazakhstan due to differences in ideologies, principles and goals (Tokayev 2001). Therefore, the author decided to choose 1991-2019 timeframe and apply constructivism, which allows to understand the nature and functions of diplomatic missions in the formation of new unknown identities, norms, and ideas that Kazakhstan applies *vis-à-vis* Japan and, hereby, to answer above-mentioned research questions. Speaking about the importance of Japan, it is worth noting that Japan for many years was one of the major donors for Kazakhstan. In Oct. 1992, Japan hosted the Tokyo Conference on Assistance to the Newly Independent States (MOFA 1992). In addition, Japan contributed to Kazakhstan's early membership in both the ADB and the EBRD, which, in turn, contributed to the implementation of vital infrastructure and social projects in the country. In Sept. 1999, Japan hosted the International Conference on Semipalatinsk. The forum allowed Kazakhstan to get additional assistance in the rehabilitation of affected people and areas contaminated by radiation. However, such assistance was provided based on the "*help for self-help*" principle, laid down in 1992 (MOFA 2000). In fact, this norm is one of the key aspects of the Japanese "Self-Others" identity towards all CA countries. On its part, Kazakh officials regularly use these historical episodes to demonstrate Kazakhstan's "grateful nature" in relation to Japan. As follows, Kazakhstan retains the open door for new cooperation programs. Such an attitude by Kazakh authorities also helps the Japanese Government to justify economic assistance to Kazakhstan. Thereof, appropriate references of Japan are reflected in many key documents for Kazakhstan such as the Foreign Policy Concept (2014-2020) and the National Investment Strategy (2018-2022) (MFA 2014). In 2019, Japan also joined the top 40 countries for Kazakhstan's economic diplomacy in terms of bilateral trade, investment and transfer of technological expertise (Demidov 2019). Even earlier, in 2016, visa requirements for visiting Kazakhstan were unilaterally lifted for all Japanese citizens (InformBureau 2016).

In addition, Japan cannot ignore the fact that Kazakh side entrusted the development of the master

plan for the new capital to a famous Japanese architect Mr. Kisho Kurokawa<sup>10</sup>. Another Japanese architect Mr. Kiyonori Kikutake also designed several buildings in the city (Ogawa 2009:86). In 2010, former World Bank's Regional Vice President Mr. Shigeo Katsu headed Kazakhstan's flagship of higher education--Nazarbayev University (Abe 2015). Today, many projects related to the capital of Kazakhstan are associated with the aspirations of the country's First President to project Kazakhstan as "a strong and rapidly developing nation"<sup>11</sup>. Not so accidentally, the Japanese have become a part of this process and discourse. And, the Japanese themselves began to involuntarily compare this process with the "*o-yatoi gaikokujin*" ("hired foreigners") effect of Meiji Restoration in Japan (Ogawa 2009:83).

Nine years ago, Kazakhstan discussed the possibility of launching an exclusive program of cooperation with Asian countries-- "Asian Vector". This program was supposed to replicate the success of another no less ambitious State program of Kazakhstan titled "Path to Europe for 2009-2011" (Zakon. kz 2011). The objective of the new program, which was never launched, was to develop trade, economic and investment cooperation with the leading countries of the region; and secure Kazakh membership in political, security, and economic forums of Asia<sup>12</sup>. Unlike European countries, the Asian Vector's fail<sup>13</sup> suggests that Kazakhstan has been considering Asian region as a complex task, which cannot rely on the use of standard approaches and fit for all principles of cooperation. Accordingly, Asia requires an exclusive algorithm for each country, especially for such specific nations as China, Korea, and Japan. For example, according to previous Japanese Ambassador to Kazakhstan, Mr. Ichiro Kawabata, China occupies the main place in Kazakh diplomacy, while Japan holds an only ninth place (Kawabata 2018).

In this regard, the author provides a more detailed analysis of each "agency, process and structure" (Wendt 1992:422), as indicated below.

## 2. Foreign Ministry of Kazakhstan

The Law on Diplomatic Service (2002) regulates MFA activities. The Minister, to whom all departments and other relevant organizations are subordinate, heads the MFA. However, the Minister directly manages only a few divisions, primarily related to strategic planning, state secrets and auditing<sup>14</sup>; five deputy ministers and one executive secretary supervise separate departments. Cooperation with Japan is simultaneously "covered" by several departments--the Investment Committee, the Committee for International Information (media), the Department of Asia and the Pacific (CA+Japan Dialogue (CAJ),

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10 "Kisho Kurokawa--simbioticheskaya arkhitektura i futuristicheskij dizayn dlya Astany", Kazinform, 30 Jun. 2018, [https://www.inform.kz/ru/kise-kurokava-simbioticheskaya-arhitektura-i-futuristicheskij-dizayn-dlya-astany\\_a3304816](https://www.inform.kz/ru/kise-kurokava-simbioticheskaya-arhitektura-i-futuristicheskij-dizayn-dlya-astany_a3304816). (Accessed: 05/12/2019).

11 Ibid.

12 The author interviewed an unnamed employee of the MFA Kazakhstan on 21 Jun. 2019.

13 Analysis of open documents at the MFA's website shows that the document was not approved.

14 The schematic structure of the MFA, including the number of employees, is publicly available on the MFA's website, <http://mfa.gov.kz/ru/content-view/organizatsionnaya-struktura-mid>. (Accessed: 06/01/2020).

ASEM, bilateral issues, etc.), Department of Multilateral Cooperation (UN and other IOs), Department of International Security, Department of Consular Service and others. The Department of Asia and the Pacific is supervised by the First Deputy Minister, which proves the special importance of Asia in the MFA's work<sup>15</sup>. At the same time, issues of international cooperation are also monitored at the level of the Executive Offices of the President (Akorda), PM, Parliament and Security Council<sup>16</sup>. Accordingly, the Embassy is experiencing pressure from two sides--from the MFA and other state bodies of Kazakhstan, as well as from Japanese public and private agencies. As was acknowledged by Kazakh diplomat, one of the most pressing issue remains to be the coordination of international activities of all Kazakh public agencies, which sometimes try to pursue own tactics and strategies<sup>17</sup>. In fact, the Embassy acts as an "entry point" for Japanese initiatives (in addition to the Japanese Embassy in Kazakhstan), as well as an "exit point" of Kazakhstani ideas. This suggests that embassies as agents of their respective countries are responsible for: (a) transmission of ideas, norms and identities about their leaders and nations; (b) analysis of the Japanese international behavior and perception of its international role. In this regard, the author develops an analysis of the Kazakh Embassy's role with the heads of diplomatic missions and ordinary diplomats, whose real cases could help to understand the notion of "human consciousness" in action (Hyaes 2017:91), as well as reveal the "systematic communication ontology" (Wendt 1992:425) of Kazakh-Japan relations.

### III. Kazakh Ambassadors: From Career Politicians to Career Diplomats

In contrast to Russia, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and other post-Soviet countries, during the USSR era, there were no noticeable Kazakh diplomats, who occupied senior posts in the Soviet embassy in Japan. However, this does not mean that Kazakhstan did not have any specialists with knowledge of the Japanese language. Nevertheless, the recent growth of language specialists is related to the increased availability of Japanese language courses in Kazakhstan (Sugiura 2007:121).

In Feb. 2020, the two countries celebrated the 28<sup>th</sup> anniversary of bilateral diplomatic relations. Over this time, only three Kazakh ambassadors were dispatched to Japan. They are Mr. Tleukhan Kabdrakhmanov (1996-2003), Mr. Bolat Nurgaliyev (2003-2006) and Mr. Akylbek Kamaldinov (2007-2016). At the same time, the record belongs to Amb. Kamaldinov, who spent almost ten years in Japan<sup>18</sup>. Current Ambassador, Yerlan Baudarbek-Kozhatayev, was appointed in 2016. Due to recent amendments

15 For example, Deputy Minister Margulan Baimukhan oversees the Department of Europe. In fall 2019, First Deputy Minister Mukhtar Tileuberdi was appointed as new Foreign Minister.

16 The Department of Foreign Policy and International Relations of the Presidential Office monitors the implementation of the state's foreign policy by all agencies. Please see PO's website, [http://www.akorda.kz/ru/executive\\_office/executive\\_office\\_structure/structural\\_subdivisions/otdel-vneshnei-politiki-i-mezhdunarodnyh-svyazei](http://www.akorda.kz/ru/executive_office/executive_office_structure/structural_subdivisions/otdel-vneshnei-politiki-i-mezhdunarodnyh-svyazei). (Accessed: 06/12/2019).

17 The author interviewed an unnamed employee of the MFA Kazakhstan on 21 Jun. 2019.

18 Copies of all decrees available on the President's website. The biographies of the ambassadors were taken from the websites of the embassies of Kazakhstan in Japan and Canada.

introduced to the above-mentioned Law, the term of assignment of new Kazakh ambassadors to Japan should not exceed five years (Zakon.kz 2017).

The first Kazakh Ambassador to Japan is an economist by training. In 1991-1993, he served as a Chairman of the State Economic Committee (Cabinet member). According to Kazakh experts, the task of the first Kazakh ambassadors was “to create the infrastructure of Kazakh diplomacy abroad” (Ashimbayev 2014). However, the choice in favor of an expert with an economic background was determined by the desire of Kazakh leadership to effectively use the Japanese experience of economic reforms, as well as to develop close trade relations with Japan<sup>19</sup>. In addition, the first specialists who knew Japanese language worked together with Amb. Kabdrakhmanov, i.e. succeeding Kazakh envoys to Japan (except for Amb. Nurgaliyev). Another “student” of Mr. Kabdrakhmanov--Mr. Sabr Yessimbekov--will later head Kazakhstan-Japan Business Cooperation Committee. In fact, such steps remind the readers of Kazakh *intelligentsia* voices about creation of “Second Japan”. At that time, Japan’s case began to appear among possible models for future Kazakhstan’s reforms. In addition, local media began to recall the interest of Kazakh scholars in pre-war Japan, despite its WWII legacy.

Second Ambassador, Mr. Bolat Nurgaliyev<sup>20</sup>, had been engaged in security issues at the MFA. The appointment of the former Ambassador of Kazakhstan to the US (1996-2000) was aimed at a possible strengthening of the political dialogue between the two countries, including in the field of security. It is possible that amid the post-9/11 events, Kazakhstan was interested in a possible convergence with the U.S. and Japan on regional security issues, including Central Asia. It is noteworthy that after his assignment in Tokyo, Amb. Nurgaliyev was appointed as a Secretary-General of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (2007-2009) and later became a Special Representative of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office for Protracted Conflicts (2010). Completion of his diplomatic mission in Japan coincided with another significant achievement for CA countries--the first visit of Japanese PM to Central Asia in Aug. 2006 (Bilyal 2019).

Mr. Kamaldinov became the first Ambassador of Kazakhstan to Japan who knew Japanese. According to his biography, he studied Japanese at the Moscow’s Institute of Asian and African Countries in 1990-1992, as well as at the Japan Foundation’s Language Institute in Saitama in 1995. In fact, it was the first successful case of Kazakhstan’s participation in the Japanese courses for Foreign-Service Officers & Public Officials. Mr. Kamaldinov had also taught Japanese at the Kazakh National University (1992-1993). Later, the MFA recruited him as part of efforts to enforce its professional personnel. Before his high assignment, in 2003-2007, Mr. Kamaldinov served as the head of the external relations department at the PM’s Office. The appointment of new Kazakh Ambassador in 2007 also coincided with the visit of a large delegation of Japanese business community led by then-Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry Akira Amari, whose trip helped the new envoy to create a favorable launch pad in Japan. Accordingly, it can be assumed that

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19 According to the MFA representative, the prerogative to appoint Kazakh ambassadors belongs only to the Head of State (Art. 44 of the Constitution).

20 Ambassador’s biography is available on Zakon.kz website, [https://online.zakon.kz/Document/?doc\\_id=31161664#pos=1;90](https://online.zakon.kz/Document/?doc_id=31161664#pos=1;90). (Accessed: 06/12/2019).



the appointment of a Japanese-speaking Kamaldinov was a demonstration of Kazakhstan's respect and pragmatic intentions to develop close cooperation with Japan. His long stay in Japan can be considered as an indicator of the success of the strategy chosen by Akorda. It should be noted that many Japanese Ambassadors in Kazakhstan so far have only been fluent in Russian or English.

In 2016, another Japanese expert, Mr. Baudarбек-Kozhatayev, who also studied Japanese at the Moscow's Institute of Asian and African Countries, Japan Foundation (Saitama) and JICA Okinawa Centre, replaced Amb. Kamaldinov. He also translated working meetings of the former Kazakh leader in Japan in 1994, 1999 and 2016 (Baudarбек-Kozhatayev 2016). In 2017, Amb. Baudarбек-Kozhatayev became a visiting professor at Tokai University, despite the lack of previous research experience (Tokai Univ. 2017). This was the first case when a Kazakh diplomat began to engage in academic activities in Japan in parallel with his diplomatic work. This may be connected to the plans to enhance Kazakhstan-related discourse reaching the academic field, which until now has been limited by the occasional lectures of Kazakh ambassadors.

In most cases, as recent appointments suggest, a certain circle of the MFA specialists knowing Japanese was formed in Kazakhstan with the help of Japanese public and private sectors ("Japanese school"). For example, a similar situation today is observed in Kazakh embassies in France, Germany, Poland, China, Turkey and the Arab countries. On one hand, this suggests that Japan attaches great importance to the training of Kazakh civil servants in Japan. On the other hand, this indicates that Kazakhstan supports this process to maintain the so-called "affinity bonds" with Japan, which Japanese politicians so often refer to. If earlier this definition implied only the factor of Japanese POWs, today this phrase implies the absence of political contradictions, as well as strong support for the Japanese international initiatives among CA countries.

Today, development of professional human resources between Kazakhstan and Japan is carried out through the International Scholarship of the President of Kazakhstan (Bolashak) and scholarships of the Government of Japan (MEXT, JICA, ADB-JSP, JJWBGSP<sup>21</sup>) (Abe 2015). According to Mr. Isao Iijima, Special Advisor to the Cabinet, currently, there is a boom of foreign ambassadors in Japan with high-level proficiency in Japanese<sup>22</sup>. The Japanese government also supports this trend. It could be proved by regular meetings of the PM of Japan with Japanese speaking ambassadors in his official residence (Kantei). The recent (fifth) group meeting with the participation of 19 ambassadors (e.g. Afghanistan, Armenia, China, Hungary, Kazakhstan, Russia, and Tajikistan) was held on 8 Jan. 2020 (PM Office 2020). In 2010, similar idea was implemented by the DPJ, when they founded the "Café Democrats" to develop a direct dialogue between party members and the diplomatic corps (DPJ 2010). However, the first association of Japanese speaking ambassadors--"Heisei-Kai"--was created even earlier, in the 1990s (Japan Foundation

21 In different years, the author applied for all the scholarships indicated. In 2017, he received a MEXT scholarship. Since 2018, he serves as an External Relations Officer at the MEXT Scholars Association.

22 Link to Isao Iijima's article in *Shukan Bunshun*, <https://ameblo.jp/makuharihongo-wako/entry-12136118175.html>. (Accessed: 19/06/2019).

2004). Heisei-Kai members regularly promoted exclusive group meetings between foreign ambassadors and prominent Japanese politicians and diplomats. Kazakh Embassy has been actively involved in all these initiatives. As a result, the “language” factor serves as a sort of “invitation” to participate in political discourse at the highest political level. Such “signals” from both sides help Kazakh diplomats with Japanese skills to actively participate in the local debate on the Japanese foreign policy.

It is mean that through a well-adjusted personnel policy, over the past 12 years Akorda has been trying to participate in this process. At the same time, Kazakh ambassadors are trying to convey their vision not only in Japan but also in Kazakhstan through local media. Two objectives can be seen in this trend: first, to strengthen the support for their endeavors among the elites and second, to strengthen the national discourse on the importance of Japan. In total, these efforts help them to enhance Kazakh support to the Japanese actions.

These findings also forced the author to look at the cases of ordinary diplomats, who live and work under conditions of “international life” (Hyaes 2017:91).

#### 1. Ordinary Diplomats: “Small” Bridges of Friendship

In Japanese media, the readers can discover only minor notes about the work of Kazakh Embassy’s staff (except for the Ambassador). Similar situation is observed regarding the Japanese Embassy in Kazakhstan. Exceptions are Ms. Mariko Tsunokake (MOFA staff) and Mrs. Kanae Yamamoto (MP, Komeito), who were able to win the sympathy of Kazakh people thanks to their knowledge of Kazakh language (Nur.kz 2017). As a result, Kazakh media frequently manipulated the image of “kindred” Japanese diplomats in various domestic discourses related to the national language policy. At the same time, Kazakh diplomats with Japanese skills are in a less advantageous position, since the number of various specialists in Japan with a high level of Japanese has significantly increased in recent years. For them, language serves exclusively as a professional tool. Nevertheless, Kazakh diplomats have been trying to take an active part in various speech contests, including famous among foreign diplomats--“*Zainichi kakkoku taishikan-in nihongo supīchi kontesuto*”. To date, only Mrs. Akerke Sultanova, who worked as an assistant to the Kazakh ambassador in Tokyo, and published a very successful book on the history of the Semipalatinsk Test Site, achieved the most outstanding success (Sultanova 2018).

According to the Embassy’s website (2019), the mission is currently employing seven diplomats of various ranks, from attaché to minister-counselor. Three of them are graduates of the Univ. of Tsukuba (Japan)<sup>23</sup>. There are no large structural units in the Embassy responsible for the implementation of separate dimensions. One or two persons lead each direction. Political and economic issues are the responsibility of senior diplomats and, “international cooperation” is in conjunction with “protocol” and “tourism”. This fact may indicate that the key issues of international cooperation are discussed directly through the permanent missions of the two countries in New York, Geneva or Vienna. In addition, CAJ Dialogue, which is the

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23 Excerpt from the speech of Amb. Baudarbek-Kozhatayev at the Univ. of Tsukuba on 21 May 2019.

only multilateral dialogue platform between Japan and CA, does not have a secretariat. Nevertheless, the MOFA conducts regular diplomatic retreats with CA envoys, presumably to probe new ideas or convey political messages, including in the framework of CAJ format (Dissuykov 2019:13). This shows that such favorable conditions help Kazakh diplomats in Tokyo to focus exclusively on the bilateral agenda. Moreover, according to the Kazakh diplomat, Japanese entities create numerous opportunities of informal communication between foreign diplomats and local opinion leaders, as well as their spouses, offering them honorary membership in various elite associations (e.g. International Friendship Exchange Council, Roppongi Hills Club, Koganei Golf Club). Foreign diplomats also create own exchange associations (e.g. Nadeshiko-kai, Tokyo Diplomatic Group). Nevertheless, such associations do not exist among CA or CIS diplomats.

During the absence of Kazakh ambassadors (before the arrival of the first Ambassador and between shifts of subsequent ambassadors), functions of temporary heads were performed by Mr. Yessimbekov (1995-1996), Mr. Baudarbek-Kozhatayev (2003), Ms. Dinara Zheldybaeva (2006-2007) and Mr. Almas Dissuykov (2016).

## 2. Commercial Attaches

In 2016-2018, an Investment Counsellor for the first and the last time was dispatched to the Embassy. The institute of “Investment Counselors”, as agents of the former Ministry of Investment and Development, was introduced in order “to attract investment from ten priority countries, e.g. China, France, Germany, Japan, Republic of Korea, the U.K., and the U.S.” (MFA 2018). In Japan, Mr. Arystan Kabikenov occupied this post. He was dispatched to Japan from the high post of the Deputy Head of the PM’s Office (2015-2016). After his temporary assignment to Japan, he was appointed as the Vice Minister of Industry and Infrastructure Development and later as the Deputy to the Governor of Pavlodar Oblast. The appointment of an investment officer was initiated to show that Kazakhstan is ready and able to promote the presence of Japanese TNCs and SMEs in Kazakhstan. This “experiment” most likely ceased to exist after the transfer of investment-related offices and companies to the MFA in Jan. 2019. Nevertheless, this “experience” can be attributed to the signal that Kazakhstan was close to converting the nature of its diplomatic institutions in Japan to focus more on economic and trade-related tasks. For example, there are 12 diplomats at the Japanese Embassy in Nur-Sultan, including the Ambassador, the military attaché and one officer responsible for the economic bloc (State Protocol Service 2019:30). The economic bloc is solely focused on promoting the interests of Japanese business<sup>24</sup>, which indicates the differences in the identities of the two countries.

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24 The MOFA has established the “Japanese Business Support Promotion Headquarter” to advance Japan’s international competitiveness. The liaison officer at the Embassy level is First Secretary Mr. Yukio Ishibiki, who is also a specialist in energy and mineral resources. Please see the Embassy’s and MOFA’s websites, <https://www.kz.emb-japan.go.jp/jp/about-us/tantoukan/index.htm> and <https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/files/000243362.pdf>. (Accessed: 05/12/2019).

### 3. Military Attaches

According to Japanese Defense Ministry (2019), military attaches have been working in 82 embassies and five diplomatic missions of Japan. There is no military attaché at the Kazakh Embassy in Japan. In Central Asia, apart from Kazakhstan and Afghanistan, there are no Japanese military attaches. The specific foundations of Kazakh-Japanese defense cooperation were laid in the 2017 Memorandum on Defense Cooperation and Exchanges. Among the main tasks, there are security issues and regional situations, UN peacekeeping operations, counter-terrorism, maritime security, military science and education<sup>25</sup>. The Japanese military attaché in Kazakhstan is responsible for Japan's cooperation with Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan as well. Given the area of responsibility of the Japanese military attaché, it can be assumed that Japanese authorities are interested in the military-political situation in CA and the Caucasus. These facts indicate that Japan's interests towards CA are not limited solely to economic issues. The following question involuntarily arises--why did Japan choose Kazakhstan as the main basis of its security interests, and not Uzbekistan? In Apr. 2019, former PM of Kazakhstan, Mr. Karim Massimov, who is currently a Chairman of the National Security Committee (Kazakh heir of the Soviet KGB), visited Japan. However, the information about the visit and its content was not officially released by both states (Nikkei 2019). After the meeting with Mr. Massimov, Japanese PM also held talks with National Security Advisor, Director of the Cabinet Intelligence and Research Office, and Deputy Head of Public Security Intelligence Agency. This fact may be related to the intention of both states not to politicize certain aspects of bilateral cooperation, which may affect their relations with third-party countries, i.e. Russia or China. CA countries and Japan adopt a similar position in the CAJ framework, bypassing the discussion of the policies of third-party countries (Dissyukov 2019:15). Accordingly, Kazakhstan and Japan do not intend to mix bilateral relations with "rivalry" or "balancing" norms.

## IV. Official Attributes: To Purchase or Lease

Embassies represent the most essential attribute of the country's physical presence abroad. The history of the Kazakh Embassy's buildings has at least three cases. Initially, the Embassy was located at the office building in Tokyo's Shinagawa Ward. Later, the Embassy moved to a separate building in Meguro Ward. The Embassies of Uzbekistan and the Kyrgyz Republic were also located nearby. In 2011, the Embassy of Kazakhstan moved to Minato Ward, next to the territory of the Russian Embassy, even though anti-Russian demonstrations often take place in that area<sup>26</sup>. It coincided in time so that after the Kazakhs the embassies of Uzbekistan and the Kyrgyz Republic also changed their locations. This example demonstrates the CA countries are trying to adhere to similar conditions in Japan. It also indicates CA diplomats are closely

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25 The text of the document is available on the website of the Ministry of Defense of Japan, [https://www.mod.go.jp/j/approach/exchange/area/docs/2017/07/24\\_memo\\_kz\\_e.pdf](https://www.mod.go.jp/j/approach/exchange/area/docs/2017/07/24_memo_kz_e.pdf). (Accessed: 12/12/2019).

26 The author repeatedly witnessed such demonstrations during numerous visits to the Embassy of Kazakhstan in Tokyo during his studies in Japan.

following the work of their colleagues in Tokyo. In all these cases, moving to central areas of Tokyo can be explained by several reasons: (a) raising the status and objectives of the Embassy; (b) increased financial support for the Embassy; (c) an increase in the intensity of contacts with Japanese partners. Accordingly, the issue of relocation remains an important tool for CA diplomacy in Japan, which, among other things, speaks of their desire to be closer to Kasumigaseki<sup>27</sup>. However, the four-storey building of the Kazakh Embassy has its official name--Azabu Kaisei Building Annex and is owned by a private Japanese company. So far, Kazakhstan is still far from the issue of acquiring own land and building in Japan, which can be considered as even more crucial step. In 2012, only 29 countries had own land slots in Tokyo (House of Representatives 2012). Traditionally, Kazakh MPs take a tough stance on the issue of purchasing expensive buildings and land slots for the MFA needs abroad. The modern history of Kazakhstan also recorded several cases of corruption offences around the construction of Kazakh embassies abroad<sup>28</sup>. At the same time, Kazakhstan does not have consulates general or consular posts in other Japanese cities. This suggests the current work of the Embassy covers the present level of bilateral relations. Moreover, according to the MOFA's basic data on Japan-Kazakhstan relations, less than 600 Kazakhstani citizens live in Japan (2019).

### 1. Honorary Consulates

Kazakhstan has three honorary consulates in Japan--in Nagoya (Aichi), Osaka and Fukuoka, which are important industrial and financial centers of Japan. Earlier, Kazakhstan had two additional honorary consulates in Sapporo (Hokkaido) and Kyoto<sup>29</sup>. Then, the president of a small transport company in Hokkaido and master of Buddhist association in Kyoto were listed as Kazakh honorary consuls.

The Honorary Consulate in Osaka was opened on 25 Dec. 2018, in the regional office of Marubeni Corp., to "support accelerated economic and cultural ties between Kazakhstan and the Kansai region" (Marubeni 2019a). Marubeni's local representative assumed the post of Honorary Consul. However, this is not the first consulate of Kazakhstan in Kansai. In 2009, in the wake of the development of commercial relations between JSC National Atomic Company "Kazatomprom" and Japanese energy companies, an honorary consulate was opened in the regional office of Toshiba Corp. (2009). Then, the post of honorary consul belonged to Toshiba's representative. Such a radical shift was caused by transformation of business relations between Toshiba and Kazatomprom, as well as scandals around the leadership of the Japanese TNC<sup>30</sup>. This brief case shows that Kazakh economic diplomacy is extremely active in recruiting Japanese

27 A metonym for the Japanese government entities.

28 In 2018, two senior MFA officials were detained on charges of corruption violations. Please see Tengrinews, [https://tengrinews.kz/kazakhstan\\_news/diplomata-erika-utembaeva-otustili-pod-zalog-361587/](https://tengrinews.kz/kazakhstan_news/diplomata-erika-utembaeva-otustili-pod-zalog-361587/). (Accessed: 06/12/2019).

29 "Honorary Consulate of Kazakhstan opened in Sapporo", Kazinform, 9 Mar. 2010, [https://www.inform.kz/en/honorary-consulate-of-kazakhstan-opened-in-sapporo\\_a2245910](https://www.inform.kz/en/honorary-consulate-of-kazakhstan-opened-in-sapporo_a2245910). (Accessed: 06/12/2019).

30 In Dec. 2017, Toshiba bought back from "Kazatomprom" 10 per cent stake in Westinghouse Electric Company. In Mar. 2017, Westinghouse (a subsidiary of Toshiba) filed a petition for a bankruptcy proceeding under the US Bankruptcy Code. Please see Kazatomprom's website, <https://www.kazatomprom.kz/en/media/view/kazatomprom-podal-akcii-kompanii-westinghouse-electric>. (Accessed: 06/12/2019).

companies to advance their positions in Japan. At the same time, Kazakhstan's diplomats are sensitive to the reputational risks associated with business activities of their foreign partners, i.e. they try to avoid deals with troubled companies.

Honorary Consulate in Fukuoka opened in 2010 in the building of another energy company--Kyushu Electric Power (Kyushu Electric 2012). Currently, the consulate covers the following regions--Fukuoka, Saga, Nagasaki, Oita, Kumamoto, Miyazaki and Kagoshima. In 2010, the honorary consulate in Nagoya was opened at the HQ of another Japanese TNC--Toyota Tsusho. The inaugural ceremony was attended by the then Chairman of the lower chamber of Kazakh Parliament, Mr. Ural Mukhamedzhanov (JPubb 2010). It is noteworthy Toyota Tsusho's board of directors also includes former Foreign Minister of Japan, Mrs. Yoriko Kawaguchi, who was at the forefront of the creating CAJ in 2004. In addition, Kawaguchi frequently appears in Kazakh media, especially on CA and security-related issues. This fact may indicate that Japanese companies with business ties in Kazakhstan use various "attributes" to strengthen their profile in communication channels with Kazakhstani officials and *vice versa*. In general, these examples show one of the essential criteria for honorary consulates' establishment in Japan were the interests of Japanese TNCs in Kazakh uranium and rare earth metals' deposits (Ogawa 2009:90). In turn, the Honorary Consuls help the Kazakh Embassy to promote favorable discourse at the regional level, entrusting them with the main function of transmitting information about the country.

## 2. Communication Channels

The Embassy maintains several channels of communication with the Japanese audience<sup>31</sup>. In the first place is the Embassy's website. Currently, the site functions on the same platform as the MFA does. The site is present in four languages--Russian, Kazakh, English, and Japanese. However, a large part of the posts is brief news reports. Accordingly, for the readers, it is challenging to perceive what exactly was discussed during the meetings. In addition, not all sections contain the information indicated in the title. The Embassy has four social media accounts<sup>32</sup>. YouTube channel has only 64 subscribers. There are 52 videos, including the recordings of Kazakh TV programs, video clips and several original videos prepared by the Embassy itself. Instagram is a "supplement" to the Embassy's posts on Facebook (FB) and has 599 posts and 808 followers. The Embassy tweeted 1,068 times on its Twitter account, which has only 1,104 followers. FB page has 5,492 likes and 5,663 followers. Thus, FB is one of the key and priority SNS in the Embassy's work. Given the fact that among SNS subscribers there are also citizens of Kazakhstan, these figures indicate a weak interest of the Japanese audience in the Embassy's activities in Japan. On FB, the Embassy most often uses such ordinary hashtags as "Kazakhstan", "KazakhstanJapan" in Japanese and "KazakhstanJapan" in English. However, the Embassy rarely links other personal accounts and most often removes uncomfortable comments. The Japanese Embassy in Kazakhstan has only two accounts--

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31 Excerpt from the speech of Amb. Baudarbek-Kozhatayev on 21 May 2019.

32 As of 1 Jan. 2020.

Facebook with 1,595 followers and Instagram with 512 followers<sup>33</sup>. In addition, the Kazakh Embassy uses FB and the possible options for creating community groups to bring together all accessible Kazakh citizens in Japan. This once again confirms more priority is given to personal meetings with representatives of political and business communities of Japan. The author believes that in this way Kazakhstan is trying to use the available resources as efficiently as possible.

### 3. Mascots vs. Idols

Due to the high popularity of *yuru-kyara* talismans in Japan, several embassies designed their mascots. On its part, the Embassy partners also considered the option of using 2011 Asian Winter Games mascot in Nur-Sultan and Almaty--the Irbi snow leopard<sup>34</sup>. Their choice was related to one historical fact. In 2000, President Nazarbayev presented PM Obuchi a gift, snow leopard named Shyngys, “as a sign of friendship”. Until its death, Shyngys was kept in the Tama Zoological Park. However, this idea did not get any support from the Embassy. In 2006, President Nazarbayev also presented PM Koizumi two mountain sheep (argali) that were to be kept in the Tama Zoo too (Yahoo! 2007). However, these animals have been undelivered to Japan yet. More successful attempts to create “images” of bilateral relations include the efforts of individual Japanese citizens and organizations to popularize such famous Kazakhstanis as skater Mr. Denis Ten (Abe 2015), volleyball player Ms. Sabina Altynbekova, and singer Mr. Dimash Kudaibergen, who could relatively easily arouse interest among the Japanese media (Kosnazarov 2017). Most surprisingly, Ms. Altynbekova refused to pursue a successful career in Japanese entertainment and sports industries, despite her contract with the all-powerful Japanese PR company Dentsu<sup>35</sup>. In addition, based on the Embassy’s request, the Japanese company Kokka-en, assigned the name “President Nazarbayev” to a new variety of chrysanthemums in 2016<sup>36</sup>. The choice was not accidental, given the historically important role of this flower in Japanese culture.

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33 As of 1 Jan. 2020.

34 The author interviewed an unnamed employee of the MFA Kazakhstan on 21 Jun. 2019.

35 “Japan, Kazakhstan: Dentsu Obtains Exclusive Marketing Rights to Kazakhstan Volleyball Player Sabina Altynbekova”, MENA Report, 31 Oct. 2015, <https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.tulips.tsukuba.ac.jp/docview/1728488832?accountid=25225>. (Accessed: 06/12/2019).

36 “2016 History”, Kokkaen, <http://www.kokkaen.co.jp/kikkaten/2016history.html>. (Accessed: 06/12/2019).

## V. “Club of Friends”

As was acknowledged by Amb. Kamaldinov, an informal club “Friends of Kazakhstan” operates in Japan, which includes more than 40 Japanese politicians, businesspersons, and diplomats<sup>37</sup>. According to Prof. Uyama (2004:201), in the beginning, Kazakhstan did not have any Japanese “patrons” to support Kazakh authorities in promoting intensive contacts with Japan. Therefore, creation of the group became a logic response from the Kazakh side to increase the role of Kazakhstan in the Japanese discourse<sup>38</sup>. Institutions and channels that could be involved in the establishment of such club as empirical shreds of evidence of “orders, structures, and systems” are indicated below (Hyaes 2017:91).

### 1. Joint Committees

In 1993, Japan-Kazakhstan and Kazakhstan-Japan economic cooperation committees (Joint Committee) were established. Nowadays, members of the committee act through the Japanese Association for Trade with Russia and the NIS (ROTOBO) and represent 11 Japanese companies: Marubeni, Itochu, Mitsubishi, Mitsui, Sumitomo, Toyota Tsusho, Sojitz, Nissin, INPEX, MUFG Bank, and Japan Tobacco. The committee contributes to the development of business relations between Japanese private sector, government agencies, and Kazakh state enterprises. For its part, ROTOBO performs the role of a “bridge” between Kazakh and Japanese business communities, as well as the secretariat of the joint committee. Absence of a permanent secretariat on the Kazakh side could be related to numerous structural changes among the key state bodies of Kazakhstan and frequent personnel shifts among senior officials. Besides, absence of subcommittees suggests the activities of the joint committee are aimed at solving common tasks, including those concerning the preparation of general meetings. Various panel sessions during regular meetings are designed to compensate for the lack of additional sub-units.

### 2. Investment Network

The Japan-Kazakhstan Investment Network was created on 31 Mar. 2011 based on ROTOBO’s website. Similar resources also exist with respect to Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and the Kyrgyz Republic. The source is employed to post information about investment seminars, presentations, as well as analytical reports and project proposals. In 2007, the Embassy also attempted to create own portal to convey business-related information in Japanese. However, the Embassy’s source has lost its relevance due to the appearance of new state business entities in Kazakhstan. The Embassy of Kazakhstan equally uses Investment Network to counteract the activities of organizations that have compromised themselves.

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37 Amb. Kamaldinov’s interview to the TV Programme “Kabinety” (24KZ). Youtube. 16 Nov. 2014. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4eokwyrlyCg>. (Accessed: 06/12/2019).

38 Prof. Tetsuji Tanaka, personal communication on 14 Feb. 2018.



For example, the first and only official appeal was made in respect of the Japanese NGO “Progress”<sup>39</sup>. According to the MFA employee, Kazakh embassy often has to deal with “scammers”, who are trying to take advantage of Kazakh interest in economic cooperation with Japanese business. Embassy employees use different tricks that help them identify impostors at earlier stages<sup>40</sup>.

### 3. Intergovernmental Commission

In 2008, during the visit of the First President to Japan, the two countries agreed to raise the level of the joint committee by including Japanese officials, i.e. METI, MOFA and other Japanese entities, to its composition. Initially, in 2006, chair of Kazakh part, Mr. Bolat Palymbetov, then-Vice-Minister of Economy and Budget Planning, raised two issues: the transformation of the committee and raising its status (Dadabaev 2019:49). At that time, meetings of the committee were not convened regularly. The interval between the seventh and eighth meetings was four years, and the interval between the eighth and ninth meetings was two years. The first meeting of the Joint Commission of the Government and Private Sectors of Kazakhstan and Japan was held in 2009 in Nur-Sultan<sup>41</sup>. Since that, a two-tier mechanism for promoting business contacts has been created in Kazakhstan and Japan. Joint committee remains the “core” of the commission, while government agencies act as “superstructures” that give special status to bilateral relations. In addition, this mechanism establishes the basis of state support for bilateral business initiatives. This fact may also lead to the failure of CA countries to construct a separate multilateral business platform within the framework of CAJ Dialogue (Dissyukov 2019:13).

### 4. Foreign Investors Council

Currently, two Japanese companies, Marubeni and Mitsubishi, are the members of the Council of Foreign Investors (FIC) under the President of Kazakhstan. Marubeni became the last full member of the FIC in 2017. In 2018, Vice-Chairman of Marubeni assumed the post of co-chairman of the joint committee (Marubeni 2019b). However, until 2015, i.e. before the visit of PM Shinzo Abe to Central Asia, Marubeni headed a business committee with Uzbekistan, and Mitsubishi with Kazakhstan. It seems that on the eve of the visit, two companies agreed on a mutual exchange of two posts. In general, FIC establishes a channel for communication with the Japanese business, as well as the Japan-led ADB. Moreover, Marubeni and Mitsubishi *de-facto* act as the collective voice of the Japanese business in Kazakhstan.

### 5. Parliamentary Friendship League

Parliamentary diplomacy in Japan is seen as an important component for “deepening international understanding and friendship” (House of Representatives 2013). According to Kazakh Embassy’s posts on

39 ROTOBO, <http://www.jp-kz.org/data/from%20kzembassy.pdf>. (Accessed: 24/06/2019).

40 The author interviewed an unnamed employee of the MFA Kazakhstan on 21 Jun. 2019.

41 ROTOBO, <http://www.jp-kz.org/conference/1st/summary1.pdf>. (Accessed: 20/12/2019).

FB, the league comprises of more than 40 MPs, including Mr. Takeo Kawamura (chairman), Mr. Naokazu Takemoto, Mrs. Yamamoto, Mrs. Yasuko Komiyama, Mr. Takeshi Shina (secretary-general), Mr. Yasutoshi Nishimura, Mr. Masaharu Nakagawa, Mr. Akira Sato, Rev. Seigo Kitamura, Mr. Yoshitaka Sakurada, Mrs. Takako Suzuki (daughter of a famous Japanese politician Mr. Muneo Suzuki), Mrs. Nakayama, Mr. Gen Matsubara, and others. At different times, the heads of the league were former PMs of Japan, i.e. Mr. Ryutaro Hashimoto<sup>42 43</sup> and Mr. Yukio Hatoyama<sup>44</sup>, as well as Mr. Shoichi Nakagawa (close friend of PM Abe)<sup>45</sup> and Mr. Satsuki Eda (former President of the House of Councilors)<sup>46</sup>. Composition of the league is very impressive. It cannot be ruled out that Kazakh diplomats place a great emphasis on the level of league members. As readers can understand, MPs represent various political parties. This fact shows that Japanese MPs had achieved a consensus regarding the importance of Kazakh direction for Japan. This attitude helps the Kazakh side to avoid any form of criticism--the situation that significantly distinguishes Japanese MPs from their Western colleagues.

The main issues related to the league's activities have been discussed during general gatherings (not regularly) with the participation of Kazakh and Japanese diplomats. It is known that league members at least came up with several initiatives they provided support to Kazakh bid for holding EXPO-2017; nominated the First President of Kazakhstan for a Nobel Peace Prize; advanced ratification of several bilateral agreements<sup>47</sup>. In essence, it turns out that the league is actively interacting with Kazakhstan and supports the importance of Kazakhstan's initiatives and ideas. According to the Kazakh diplomat, a compact group, i.e. the league's leaders, usually produces league's decisions. For example, in 2009-2012, the key role and the initiative belonged to the DPJ deputies and after 2012 again to the LDP deputies. The author believes that despite the party differences, the league members should follow several unwritten rules, namely, respect the decisions of the league leadership, no matter which party he/she represents. The league chair also accompanies the Ambassador and other senior Kazakh officials during their meetings with the Cabinet members, Parliament and LDP officials. In reality, the Chairman acts as a principal "patron" of Kazakh interests in Japan. However, this cannot be called affirmative since SNS accounts appeared only in 2014. For example, in Apr. 2019, Kawamura attended PM Abe's meeting with former Kazakh PM

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42 "Japan's Former PM Heads Parliamentary Japan-Kazakhstan League: Russia & FSU News Bulletin Edition", Daily News Bulletin, 15 Feb. 2002, <https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.tulips.tsukuba.ac.jp/docview/456151229?accountid=25225>. (Accessed: 20/12/2019).

43 Japan's "Eurasian Diplomacy" concept was formulated by PM Ryutaro Hashimoto in 1997.

44 "Nihon Kazafusutan yūkō giin renmei sōkai", Personal blog of MP Komiyama, 9 Mar. 2011, [http://www.yasko.net/2011/03/post\\_1133.html](http://www.yasko.net/2011/03/post_1133.html). (Accessed: 20/12/2019).

45 "Takeo's Action", Personal blog of MP Kawamura, <http://www.tspark.net/report/action/0706.html>. (Accessed: 11/12/2019).

46 "Eda Satsuki katsudō nisshi", Personal blog of Mr. Eda, 16 Dec. 2010, <http://www.tspark.net/report/action/0706.html>. (Accessed: 20/12/2019).

47 Findings are based on publications by the league members, e.g. Mrs. Komiyama and Mr. Hiroyuki Moriyama, on their blogs and FB pages.

Massimov. However, reports on that meeting are still unpublished (Nikkei 2019).

## **VI. Media: Formation of Images**

There are no representative offices of other Kazakh organizations in Japan. At the same time, there is a small office of Kazakh TV channel “24KZ” in Tokyo. Analysis of the reports shows that most of the materials accounted for: (a) reports about Japan; (b) reports on bilateral cooperation; (c) assessments of political events in Kazakhstan by Japanese speakers. On its part, Japanese media do not have their representative offices in Kazakhstan. All information comes from Moscow offices (e.g. Mainichi Shimbun) or Kazakh freelancers (e.g. Nikkei Asian Review). This also does not speak in favor of both countries. Kazakhstan is trying to manipulate public opinion regarding Japan, showing both the enormous potential for cooperation and the presence of certain difficulties in Japan as possible deterrents in Tokyo’s actions. The Japanese, on the other hand, they see no reason for a permanent presence in CA, which indicates, apparently, weak interest of the Japanese audience in the region<sup>48</sup>. If the MFA uses all the possible opportunities for publications in Japan, the MOFA will most often resort to traditional media in Kazakhstan (e.g. “Kazinform” news agency). However, most of the interviews appear exclusively on the eve of significant Japanese visits to Kazakhstan.

## **VII. Conclusion**

Analysis of the aforementioned data shows that Kazakhstan’s diplomatic institutions in Japan play the most prominent role in maintaining close contacts with the political circles, especially with the PM’s Office, Parliament, and the MOFA, to provide political support to the Kazakh agenda in Japan. Thanks to these contacts, diplomatic institutions play an important role in the formation of identities and norms that define Kazakh-Japanese relations. Moreover, as shown in the paper, these norms are formed exclusively at the political level. Accordingly, we see how the two countries are trying to apply two different identities to each other. On its part, Kazakhstan is trying to adhere to the “golden mean,” realizing the importance of preserving “Self-Others” model and forming an alternative, “Half-Self” and “Half-Others” approach. Besides, the Government and political actors in Japan allow foreign agents to construct and maintain various platforms for communication with local agents. In this regard, politicians, in addition to the MOFA, are trying to produce new tools for gathering information, developing an international network of professional contacts, as well as promoting their foreign policy ambitions. As a result, foreign embassies allow Japanese agents to increase their authority and the likelihood of their future involvement in various diplomatic efforts. On its part, embassies receive access and assistance from the politicians who are directly or indirectly involved in the process of making foreign policy decisions.

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48 Prof. Shigeki Hakamada, personal communication on 27 Feb. 2018.

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