

Kazakhstan's January 2022 Crisis: Representations by National Experts via Social Media

Evgeny F Troitskiy¹, Anastasia M Pogorelskaya¹, Sergey M Yun¹, Darya O Dunaeva²
and Alexey L Blaginin²

Abstract

This article aims at reconstructing the representations of the 2022 January crisis developed by Kazakhstani political analysts via social media. The research methodology seeks to combine quantitative and qualitative methods by assessing these representations by use of critical discourse analysis of social media posts by Kazakhstani political analysts extracted and processed by the use of API and PolyAnalysts based on marker words. The research significance lies in the unique situation of regime instability potentially providing the expert community with the chance to speak up openly. However, it is concluded that most analysts reproduced the official discourse that is in line with the discourses developed in non-democratic context. Thus, the dominant expert discourse of the January crisis is rather homogenous and relies on the dichotomies of “the old” versus “the new” as well as “the weak” versus “the strong.” As a result, the general picture by Kazakhstani political analysts looks more like a political myth about the birth of a “new Kazakhstan” than a reconstruction of the causes, actors and consequences of the January crisis. It implies that the expert community prefers controlled evolution of the state regime rather than grass roots initiated changes.

Keywords

Kazakhstan, Crisis, social media, expert community, discourse

Received 4 October 2022; Accepted 16 October 2023

Introduction

The unprecedented political crisis shook the foundations of Kazakhstan's state in January 2022. It paved the way for the transition of control over the country's security apparatus from Nursultan Nazarbayev, the First President and, until January 6, 2022, the Chairman of the National Security Council, to President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev and for the far-reaching political reforms announced by Tokayev in March 2022. Starting with public protests against a spike in gas prices in Zhanaozen, West Kazakhstan, the crisis abruptly escalated into violence in Almaty and an apparent attempt to oust Tokayev from power. The latter asked Russia for assistance, and the rapidly arranged arrival of peacekeepers, mostly Russian, acting under the banners of the

Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) turned the tide in Tokayev's favor.

The Kazakhstani authorities portray the “bloody January” as an attack of terrorists and a plot of “some influential persons,” in particular from the security services, against

¹World Politics Department, National Research Tomsk State University, Tomsk, Russia

²Center of Applied Big Data Analysis, National Research Tomsk State University, Tomsk, Russia

Corresponding author:

Anastasia M Pogorelskaya, World Politics Department, Tomsk State University, Lenina Ave, 36, Tomsk 634050, Russia.



President Tokayev (Tokayev, 2022). The events have been referred to as a tragedy, a national trauma, a “bad streak in the history of Kazakhstan” (Kazinform, 2022). The crisis severely undermined Kazakhstan’s reputation of “an island of stability in a turbulent region” (Socor, 2015). At the same time, the Kazakhstani officials claim that the January tragedy has given birth to a transition to “a new Kazakhstan” and a reconstitution of statehood in the shape of “the Second Republic” (Tengrinews, 2022).

The outburst of violence in Kazakhstan has drawn attention from scholars of Central Asian politics. Kudaibergenova and Laruelle point out to “many holes in the official narrative of the ‘failed coup’ and develop a sophisticated framework of the analysis of January 2022 events through the lens of the ‘regime-society’ relations and the concept of ‘several states’ within the state” (Kudaibergenova & Laruelle, 2022). Thibault and Tastaibek deconstruct the official narrative as an attempt at blame-shifting (Thibault & Tastaibek, 2023). Cornell sees the root cause of the crisis in the “rapidly mounting public dissatisfaction” (Cornell, 2022). Isaacs traces the genesis of the crisis to the suppression of “oligarchic opposition” by the Nazarbayev regime in the early 2000s (Isaacs, 2022). Libman and Davidzon operationalize the concept of “authoritarian regionalism” in their thorough analysis of the CSTO intervention as a gesture of primarily symbolic importance (Libman & Davidzon, 2023).

Our paper focuses on what is largely absent from these studies of the unrest in Kazakhstan: the reaction to the crisis of the Kazakhstani expert community. Throughout the thirty years of independence, Kazakhstan has taken effort to develop a national network of political analysts. In 1993, the leading national think tank, the Kazakhstan Institute for Strategic Studies, was established by presidential decree. The Institute of World Economy and Politics was opened in 2004 under the auspices of the Nursultan Nazarbayev Foundation. In 2012, the Institute for Philosophy, formerly an institution of the Academy of Sciences transferred under the supervision of the Ministry of Education and Science after the Academy’s reform, was renamed into the Institute for Philosophy, Political Science, and Religion Studies. A number of independent centers of political and social expertise are active in Kazakhstan, including Center for Humanitarian and Political Trends, Center for Analysis and Prognosis “Open World,” Alternativa, and Public Foundation “Mir Evrazii.”

Departments of Political Science were opened by all the leading Kazakhstani universities, both metropolitan such as Al-Farabi Kazakh National University, Gumilyov Eurasian National University, Nazarbayev University, Abai Kazakh National Pedagogical University, and regional such as Toraiaghurov University in Pavlodar, Auezov University in Shymkent and Karaganda Buketov University. Within the structure of the Academy of Public Administration under

the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the National School of Public Policy has a prominent place while the objective of the Academy’s Institute of Applied Research is defined as developing “analytical products for making effective decisions in the field of public administration” (Institute of Applied Research, 2022).

For an observer of Kazakhstan’s political dynamics, a reasonable expectation is that the extensive network of national political analysts would elaborate discourses reconstructing the January tragedy and inscribing it into the country’s political history and post-crisis developments. Discourses can be developed at various discourse planes, “societal locations from which ‘speaking’ happens” (Jäger, 2001, p. 49). Social media posts form a particularly intriguing discourse plane, as they allow experts to allocate meanings to events as they unfold and to gain an almost immediate access to nodes of power and knowledge, the civil society, the public and international audiences. If discourses are metaphorically represented as a “gigantic and complex ‘milling mass’” (Jäger, 2001, p. 46), social media posts provide experts with the fastest opportunity to dig into this mass and to separate at least some wheat from the chaff, highlighting their status of knowledge producers.

This article aims at reconstructing the representations of the January crisis developed by Kazakhstani political analysts via social media and assessing these representations through the lens of critical discourse analysis. What discourses have been suggested to allocate social and political meanings to the “bloody January?” Has a dominant expert discourse emerged and, if this is the case, how homogeneous is it? These are the research questions this article seeks to explore.

Methodology

The research methodology is based on critical discourse analysis. The authors share the basic philosophical assumptions and general postulates of discourse analytical approaches (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002). Concerning this study, the authors rely on the approach of Jäger (1993, 1999) defining discourses as “the flow of knowledge—and/or all societal knowledge stored throughout all time which determines individual and collective doing and/or formative action that shapes society, thus exercising power” (Jäger, 2001, p. 34). According to Jäger, “The (dominating) discourses can be criticized and problematized by analysing them, by revealing their contradictions and nonexpression and/or the spectrum of what can be said and what can be done covered by them, and by making evident the means by which the acceptance of merely temporarily valid truths is to be achieved.”

He also systematizes the set of categories and stages of the analytical method, which can be applied for the empirical study of texts from the standpoint of critical

discourse analysis. “Fundamentally, special discourses (of the science(s)) are to be distinguished from inter-discourse, whereby all non-scientific discourses are to be regarded as components of the inter-discourse.” In general societal discourse, a great variety of themes arise. Jäger calls “thematically uniform discourse processes” discourse strands. The latter operate on various “discursive planes (science(s), politics, media, education, everyday life, business life, administration, and so on).” This paper represents the analysis of the “special” expert discourses of Kazakhstani political analysts covering the January crisis and operating in social media platforms, respectively. For the research, social media platforms such as Facebook, VKontakte (the common short name is VK), and Telegram were taken as discourse planes as the most popular social media used for posting detailed text messages.

Several criteria were applied to select Kazakhstani political analysts and think tanks whose social media posts on the January 2022 political crisis were analyzed through the discourse analysis lens. First, institutional and publication criteria were used. The list included the Kazakhstani research centers that declare conducting research on domestic and foreign policy of Kazakhstan as their aim. The list also included the political analysts who are the employees of these expert centers and publish regularly various types of research papers. Secondly, the sociological approach was used, according to which political analysts include also analysts whom the media or other experts consider as such. As a result, the list consisting of 22 research centers and 131 political analysts of Kazakhstan was formed.

Then the presence of the selected Kazakhstani political analysts and research centers in social media such as Facebook, VK, and Telegram was analyzed. The analysis was carried out manually through the built-in search engines of the social media. It confirmed that Facebook is the most popular social media for the Kazakhstani expert community. All 22 selected research centers and 63 out of 131 political analysts (48%) have pages on Facebook, 1 research center and 11 political analysts are present on VK, and 4 research centers and 9 political analysts are present on Telegram.

To search for expert posts devoted to the January 2022 political crisis, the list of marker words was prepared in accordance with the characteristics of the event and the research questions. The list of marker words included country names (Kazakhstan, Russia, USA, China, etc.); terms used to identify events (riots, protest, pogrom, revolution, etc.) and their actors (silovik, elite, terrorist, government, Massimov, Tokayev, Nazarbayev, etc.), to determine the causes of events (corruption, contradictions, crisis, etc.) and the role of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) in resolving the crisis. In the end,

there were 40 words and word combinations used to search automatically for relevant posts.

The search and extraction of the relevant posts by Kazakhstani research centers and political analysts published in VKontakte was done with the help of the VK API (<https://dev.vk.com/method/groups.get>, <https://dev.vk.com/method/wall.get>). Telegram messages were also extracted using the API (<https://core.telegram.org/methods>). Facebook posts were extracted from the web application using Python tools. The extraction period covered three months—January, February, and March 2022. The study period was taken only until the end of March, since from that time on, the reform program announced by the President of Kazakhstan on March 16, 2022 comes to the fore in the national politics. The total number of extracted posts from all social media in all languages without applying the marker words was 3729. Their authors included 5 research centers and 34 political analysts on Facebook, 4 research centers and 8 political analysts on Telegram, 4 political analysts on VK.

The software tool “PolyAnalyst” was used to further process the received data. It’s a software platform for the visual development of scripts for data and text analysis, as well as for building interactive reports (<https://www.megaputer.com/ru/polyanalyst/>). Firstly, “empty” posts that contain less than 30 characters were removed. 2754 posts remained, of which 2412 posts, or 87.6%, were in Russian and 342 posts were identified by PolyAnalyst as in English and five other European languages or as indeterminate. The posts in Kazakh fell into the category of indeterminate as PolyAnalyst doesn’t have a built-in vocabulary of the Kazakh language. By manually processing all 342 posts, it was determined that only 46 of them contained text in Kazakh (1.7% of 2754 selected posts).

The application of the marker words to identify the posts dedicated to the January 2022 political crisis gave the following results (only posts in Russian and Kazakh were processed): a total of 701 posts were identified, of which 680 posts were in Russian and 21 posts were in Kazakh. Each selected post was further read by paper’s authors to determine whether it refers to the events of January 2022. As a result of applying this last filter, 213 posts, 208 posts in Russian and 5 posts in Kazakh, were finally selected. They became the material for discourse analysis in this article. The authors of these 213 posts are 9 Kazakhstani political analysts who published their comments mainly on Telegram (7 experts), as well as on Facebook (2 experts), and VK (1 expert). One out of 9 experts published simultaneously in Telegram and VK.

The qualitative analysis of selected posts included the search, comparison, and interpretation of the following aspects of the January 2022 political crisis:

- How did the experts define the general significance of the crisis?
- What were the expert interpretations of the roles played by the CSTO forces and Russia in general?
- How did the experts explain the causes of the crisis?
- How were the actors identified and their actions reconstructed?

Given the freshness of events and the lack of research on the issue, this study was conceived as a primary study of an exploratory nature, focused on the initial stage of the formation of discourses of the January political crisis. In Kazakhstan, the court cases against the participants in the events have not yet been completed; the political struggle of President K.-Zh. Tokayev for maintaining power under the banner of building a “New Kazakhstan” continues. It will be of considerable heuristic value to study, among other things, such issues as the evolution, if any, and canonization of the official discourse of the January political crisis, the evolution of expert discourse, operating on other discursive planes, and their impact on the inter-discourse. In general, this will make it possible to comprehensively assess the “knowledge” about the January crisis from the point of view of power interests.

The authors of the paper sought to be as objective as possible in their study, however, the use of discourse analysis implies that the authors are participants in the discursive process which can lead to a certain bias. Also, there is no “established” list of Kazakhstani political analysts. Though every effort was taken to avoid it, the authors of the study could indeed have missed some of the experts by not including their posts in the study. The authors of the study expect that this has not affected the analysis and conclusions of the study.

Silence of institutions and active individuals

Despite the large number of political sciences research centers and political analysts in Kazakhstan, the coverage of the political crisis that took place in the country in January 2022 was surprisingly reserved. Moreover, only a minority of analysts commented on the events while they were going on. Most research centers did not officially react to the events, be it during or after the crisis. The same is true for most analysts working at or closely cooperating with Kazakhstani research centers. Some researchers reflected on the crisis later—in the end of January, February, and March 2022. They were mainly individual political analysts who are not officially affiliated to any research centers in Kazakhstan.

Having applied the marker words to the total amount of posts by Kazakhstan expert community in January–March 2022, the authors dealt with 701 posts in general. Out of them 213 posts addressed the January 2022 crisis. It turned out that the latter posts were provided only by 16 Kazakhstani

political analysts and research centers out of 30 who posted anything during the period observed. That makes 53% or more than a half. These political analysts or research centers either commented or shared other posts on the crisis in social media, namely Facebook, Telegram, or VK.

The percentage of those who kept silence was 47% (14 out of 30 Kazakhstani political analysts and research centers). “Silence” in this case means the absence of posts addressing the January crisis despite general use of social networks during the period outlined. Thus, none of the research centers formulated its position on the crisis within the three months covered by this research. On the contrary, there were several political analysts who commented actively on the crisis but the number of them was very limited: the number of those who published more than 10 comments on the crisis makes up only 6 (about 5% of all the identified experts and 20% of those who made publications in the social networks on the crisis in the period of January–March 2022).

Discourse analysis pays relatively little attention to silence and absence, putting emphasis on texts as elements of discourse, although recent studies attempted to “fill a gap in the field of discourse studies by addressing the issue of silence and absence in discourses” (Schröter & Taylor, 2018, p. 1). Since “silence and absence in discourse can be meaningful” (Schröter & Taylor, 2018, p. 2), absent or belated comments of most Kazakhstani political analysts on the domestic crisis that took place in January 2022 provides an interesting case to study.

Starting with Foucault (1978), silence is seen as abstaining from mentioning something within a discourse. However, silence constitutes a part of discourse and silence about certain aspects of reality may be caused by the need or wish to cover something. The research institutions seem to slip out of the discourse on domestic crisis in Kazakhstan. On the contrary, a number of individual political analysts were active in their reaction to the crisis.

The question of why most Kazakhstani research centers and political analysts kept silence is beyond the scope of our article. Explaining the prevalence of silence among Kazakhstani research centers and within the national community of political analysts would require a thorough analysis of their reactions to other significant events of the country’s recent history.

January 2022 as a milestone

The 2022 January crisis in Kazakhstan is a valuable case for analysis because in non-democratic regimes and in Central Asia in particular there are few or even no “reliable indicators of consent outside periods of regime instability” (du Boulay & Isaacs, 2019, p. 22). Thus, it is difficult to outline whether experts or societies at large share the ideas of the official discourse or support them just to be in line with it

under usual conditions. The expert community reaction to the crisis provides the case that reveals the ideas generated in the time of regime instability.

The social media texts posted by the Kazakhstani political analysts who followed the crisis reveal the general consensus among them on the essential consequences of the January events. They mostly agree on the idea that the domestic crisis in Kazakhstan has initiated a fundamental change: “Thus it may be mentioned not only the change of state government model that started but also the change in the paradigm of state and public development...” (Ashimbaev, 2022i).

However, many analysts are skeptical about the speed of the reforms: “The transformations in the country will be fundamental and the political reforms will be slow...” (Nursha, 2022a).

Kazakhstani political analysts expressed doubt about the possibility of removing the old elite: “The environment of Elbasy [the official title of the first President of independent Kazakhstan N. Nazarbayev] will move to the environment of Tokayev except for those persons who were especially close to the leaving (President) and annoying the population” (Nursha, 2022a). In addition, the possibility of solving the fundamental problems of the country was questioned: “The success of the outlined plans depends on subjective issues. The first and the main one is the state machinery and the executive system that has been formed for decades...The other challenge is the corruption that runs through all the state machinery levels and often supposes the state budget to be a means of enrichment...The third challenge is the model of state machinery that is based on patron-client relations...” (Kaliyev, 2022e).

As a result, the interpretation of the crisis follows the general line of opposing “the old” to “the new.” “The old” in the comments is mainly associated with corruption and nepotism: “The problems of corruption, nepotism and economic monopolism were not the aim of the policy conducted by the first President but the side-effect of our state-building...” (Ashimbaev, 2022c); “... for Nursultan Nazarbayev the ambitions and excessive needs of some of his relatives were a serious political problem.... Nazarbayev, on the one hand, as the head of the family tried to restrain this issue, but on the other hand, he tried to be lenient...” (Ashimbaev, 2022f).

“The old” is also connected to ineffectiveness according to the researchers’ comments: “... long governing resulted into a massive syndrome of psychological fatigue as well as in a general decrease of the effectiveness of the state machinery that de facto merged with the party...” (Kaliyev, 2022c).

“The new” is evaluated mainly as positive, although not univocally and unanimously: “We listened attentively to the Message of the Head of State K.-J. Tokayev who initiated the adoption of a number of strategically important and

crucial tasks... Our nation has been looking forward to them...” (Kabuldinov, 2022b); or “Sometimes we may see that one wishes to change something but there is no idea how to do it...” (Ashimbayev, 2022k).

“The new” is largely connected with the renewal. However, the analysts’ largely fail to provide insights about the strategy and trajectory of the renewal. The general idea is the need to abolish previous defective practices (“The changes are inevitable in state machinery, sports federations, in private sector” (Kaliyev, 2022a) and the approval of the reforms outlined in the presidential message of 16 March 2022: “In other words, the New Kazakhstan is the renewal of the society and the nation and the Second Republic is the renewal of the state model.” (Karin, 2022b).

This interpretation seems to echo the official discourse in Kazakhstan concerning the essence of the events (“One thing I can say is that there was a large-scale, detailed operation aimed at overthrowing the top leadership and discrediting it in the eyes of the people and the foreign public.” (State-of-the-Nation Address by President of the Republic of Kazakhstan Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, 2022)) and the portrayal of the fundamental change triggered by the crisis (“The course towards building a New Kazakhstan is aimed at changing the paradigm of the country’s development.” (State-of-the-Nation Address by President of the Republic of Kazakhstan Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, 2022)).

Accordingly, the reconstruction of “the old” and “the new” provided by the Kazakhstani political analysts lacks accuracy and essential details. The difference between “the old” and “the new” is explained with reference either to a handful of individuals wilding the power or to the political history and the future of Kazakhstan described in the broadest terms. Although the representation of the January crisis as a moment of a fundamental change from “the old” to “the new” is arguably an oversimplified and probably an over-optimistic picture of the events, this dichotomy provides the discursive framework shared and reproduced by Kazakhstani political analysts.

According to von Soest and Grauvogel (2015, p. 21), the claim of the righteousness of a current regime is one of the strategies for its legitimation often used in non-democratic context. Thus, the previous regime by Nazarbayev is mainly addressed as outdated and ineffective while Tokayev’s regime is portrayed as “the new,” just and, therefore, legitimate by both official and expert community discourses.

Inviting the CSTO forces

Personalism-based claims are usually used as a discursive mechanism in non-democratic regimes, where the achievement of security, stability, and/or prosperity tend to be attributed to the state leader’s extraordinary qualities and role, thus legitimizing the regime (von Soest & Grauvogel, 2015, p. 21).

Although most Kazakhstani political analysts evaluate the role of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) in overcoming the 2022 January crisis in Kazakhstan positively, they attract more attention to the idea that it was the decision taken by the President of Kazakhstan rather than Russia's decision to intervene: "In this situation President Tokayev had to take the only possible decision and ask for military assistance of the CSTO..." (Ashimbaev, 2022d) or in other words: "As we understand, only the timely arrival of the CSTO forces at the call of President Tokayev saved the situation." (Ashimbaev, 2022b).

Following the general ambiguity towards Soviet past and relations with Russia that Kazakhstan political sphere is characterized by (Kudaibergenova, 2016, p. 920), the participation of the CSTO is also regarded as both a positive but potentially dangerous step.

Thus, some comments on the CSTO role express anxiety, expecting its involvement to "threaten the sovereignty" (Kaliyev, 2022f) or "look like the danger of losing independence." (Kabuldinov, 2022a). Therefore, the self-persuading spell that "... no intervention is suggested.... and no-one will allow them to stay" (Abishev, 2022e) seemed to be quite in tune with the general feeling in the beginning of the peacekeeping mission.

Since the appeal to the CSTO is by itself a traumatic experience, its role is interpreted as secondary and mostly symbolic: "Despite the appeal to the CSTO, the main difficult job must be done by Kazakhstani officers." (Abishev, 2022b), or "The deployment of the CSTO peacemaking forces allowed releasing the necessary resources ... Only Kazakhstani special forces ... participate in the counter-terrorism operation..." (Karin, 2022a). This interpretation of the CSTO mission reflects the official narrative: "... in the end, we defeated the bandits with our own forces" (Tokayev, 2022).

The idea that Kazakhstan is indebted to Russia for providing assistance during the crisis under the CSTO auspices causes much inconvenience. Accordingly, Kazakhstani political analysts deny any kind of debt, especially to Russia: "... no likely debt was mentioned. Kazakhstan is the co-founder of the CSTO." (Abishev, 2022g) and "Russia is our important partner. It will become even closer. The main thing now is not to fall under the sway [of it]." (Nursha, 2022c).

Some political analysts tend to regard the CSTO mission as different from Russia's policy, as if the CSTO were not an instrument of Moscow's policy and, in the case of January intervention, the CSTO and Russia really constituted two different entities. In their comments, the CSTO is regarded positively: "When Kazakhstan was in trouble, all friends and partners tried to support it as much as they were able to. The CSTO and Russia assisted with the peacemakers..." (Ashimbaev, 2022e) or "The involvement of the CSTO ... is also the moral, methodological and organizational support

for Kazakhstani security forces who turned out to be under time pressure and faced an organized terrorist attack." (Abishev, 2022e).

At the same time, Russia is more often than not depicted in a negative way, although it was Russia that had sent most of the CSTO peacemakers to Kazakhstan: "The CSTO, namely Russian, forces will be regarded as occupants and turn the protests into inter-ethnic dimension and the national liberation movement." (Nursha, 2022b).

The expert community reflections on the roles of the CSTO and Russia in overcoming the January crisis are ambivalent. They show the general doubt whether Kazakhstan is a strong country capable of overcoming the crisis with its own resources (thus the secondary role of the allies is highlighted) or a state at the edge of losing its independence either in the absence of help from allies (particularly Russia) or as a consequence of this assistance.

Out of the blue sky? Causes and triggers of the crisis

The interpretation of the causes of the January 2022 political crisis in Kazakhstan is presented in the posts of 8 political analysts. In general, there is a consensus among Kazakhstani political analysts that the deep problems of domestic development, exacerbated by the coronavirus pandemic, became the trigger for mass demonstrations of discontent in Kazakhstan, which were then instrumentalized for political purposes. As for the problems of domestic development, political analysts refer, firstly, to social and economic issues: "socio-economic problems accumulated and unresolved over three decades," "the social well-being of a significant part of the population has noticeably worsened," "prices for essential commodities have increased," "growth of real unemployment," "lumpenization of a certain part of citizens" (Kabuldinov, 2022a); "the gap between the rich and the poor remains the same, if not increased even more" (Sarym, 2022a); "Regarding the question of how the protest wave swept the cities of Kazakhstan in an organized way. Most of the participants can really be sincerely outraged by the current economic situation" (Abishev, 2022a); "the impoverished strata of the population took part in riots and marauding" (Nursha, 2022c); "really poor people were behind various protest actions" (Ashimbayev, 2022c).

Secondly, political analysts point to the basic socio-political problems: "rampant corruption and the low level of efficiency of the state apparatus" (Kaliyev, 2022d); "corruption in the country" (Kabuldinov, 2022a). Sanzhar Bokaev's posts made a special emphasis on the "corruption," "kleptocracy" of the Kazakhstani elite, on "Kazakhstani oligarchs who systematically robbed their people" (Bokaev, 2022a; 2022b; 2022c). Political analyst and State Secretary of Kazakhstan Yerlan Karin, interpreting the

speech of President K. Tokayev on January 11, 2022 before the Mazhilis of Kazakhstan, writes, without specifying, about “hot problems,” about the need of “New Kazakhstan” for “not only updating the state apparatus,” but also “re-booting social values,” “overcoming all sorts of fractures in the society” (Karin, 2022c).

Accordingly, there is also a consensus among Kazakhstani political analysts that among the people who participated in the events of January 2022, there were two autonomous “streams” with different goals, or “two different events” (Kaliyev, 2022b). The first stream (the first “event”) was mass peaceful demonstrations of citizens in order to draw the attention of the authorities to the accumulated problems: “peaceful protest of citizens” (Kaliyev, 2022b); “a wave of mass popular rallies and demonstrations,” “peaceful demonstrators” (Kabuldinov, 2022a); “Were the protests peaceful? Yes, they were!” (Sarym, 2022b).

The second stream (the second “event”) is organized violence for some political purposes: “destructive forces that took advantage of mass demonstrations and aimed at destabilizing the situation in the country” (Kaliyev, 2022b); “At the same time, unexpectedly, in Almaty and in some other cities of the republic, organized outrage and marauding by some well-organized forces began,” “rioters and terrorists” (Kabuldinov, 2022a); “both the impoverished strata of the population and the ‘titushki’ participated in the riots and marauding – among the assumptions of the population, these are, perhaps, the militants of Masimov, Bolatov, Satybalidin (It’s not the fact they are. But the population ascribes to them)” (Nursha, 2022c); “Were there not just aggressive people among the protesters, but organized crime, which was launched intentionally in a number of cities these days in order to turn the protest into the mainstream of riots, killings of police and military, attacks on akimats and police departments? Yes. Was it a political conspiracy or did the criminals act itself? Political forces were behind” (Sarym, 2022b); “professional provocateurs” (Abishev, 2022a).

However, what were the specific political goals of instrumentalizing mass demonstrations of discontent, organizing political violence, and destabilizing the situation in Kazakhstan? For almost all political analysts, this question remains unanswered. Thus, an analytical gap, or a blind spot, occurs in the texts of Kazakhstani political analysts in Kazakhstan on the issue. This leads us to turn to how their analysis addresses the key question of determining the actors of the January 2022 political crisis.

Actors and plot of the drama

The reconstruction of the January events by Kazakhstani political analysts stumbles on the identification of the key actors of the crisis. The shared position is that behind the

attempt to oust Tokayev lurk the “Family” of the First President and the “old elites” (Ashimbayev, 2022g; Nursha, 2022a). However, Nazarbayev’s “Family,” commonly known as a network of competing factions rather than as a hierarchical structure, hardly qualifies for the role of a unitary actor. Remarkably, the experts refrain from assigning responsibility to individual “Family” members and choose not to comment on the intriguing story of Samat Abish, Nazarbayev’s nephew and First Deputy Chairman of the National Security Committee (NSC), who was reportedly fired and arrested on January 7, with the news of his downfall refuted the following day (Interfax, 2022). The question mark looms over the role of Nazarbayev who seems to have assumed a paradoxical position of being simultaneously the head of the “Family” and the person unrelated to the January crisis.

Arguably, the “old elites” have to be confronted by the “new elites,” otherwise it makes little sense to identify the former as a key actor of the crisis. Contrary to the expectations, the Kazakhstani experts do not refer to “new elites” as actors of the January tragedy. It turns out that the “old elites” are opposed by President Tokayev acting almost in solitary and helped by the CSTO forces playing a subsidiary role. In a nutshell, the expert discourse conveys an image of a heroic fight of an individual against the nebulous sinister forces.

Those forces are commonly represented as “terrorists” (Abishev, 2022c; Karin, 2022c). While this characterization elicits multiple questions about who the terrorists are and whence they have emerged in their thousands, the discursive trope is to treat the denotation “terrorists” as self-explanatory. Even visually, they are manifestly evil, both self-revealing and self-concealing: “They wore masks... They mostly kept silence” (Kabuldinov, 2022a).

As the expert analysis turns to the role of *siloviki*, the latter appear to become the most controversial concept. *Siloviki* are heroes and victims of the tragedy, those who stemmed the terrorist tide. However, some of them are the culprits, the conspirators against Tokayev. The NSC is powerful and omnipresent, it “has planted its people everywhere...providing for its own control over the situation” and “has planned the complex scenario of power grab” (Ashimbayev, 2022a). At the same time, the NSC has turned out to be inefficient, a structure with “low organizing and political potential” (Ashimbayev, 2022h). Its Chairman, Karim Massimov, was dismissed as early as on January 5, the day after riots had engulfed Almaty, and detained on January 6. The analysts do not hesitate to praise the Kazakhstani military as “combat-ready” (Abishev, 2022f); still, Tokayev had to resort to the CSTO forces.

Once the expert attention focuses on Massimov’s role, the unanswered questions mount. Massimov tends to emerge as an anti-hero, the personification of the multitude of Tokayev’s foes. At the same time Massimov was hardly a

“Family” member, and his relationship to the “Family” is unclear. Initially, Daniyar Ashimbayev, one of the most vocal independent political analysts following the January events, assumed that “the arrested NSC leadership does not fit the role of the sole plotter” (Ashimbayev, 2022j). As the dust settled, however, Ashimbayev concluded that Massimov “organized the coup” in pursuit of his “personal objectives” (Ashimbayev, 2022i). If this was the case, the whole concept of the “Family” and “old elites” as the main actors of the January crisis falters. As most of the analysts resist the temptation to put the lion’s share of the blame on the NSC chief, there appears to be no expert consensus on NSC’s and Massimov’s roles. Making a scapegoat of Massimov would be a crude simplification rendering the underlying discursive framework of a transition from the “old” statehood to the “New Kazakhstan” untenable.

The magnitude of the January crisis raises the question of external actors’ involvement. However, external actors other than Russia are notably absent from the experts’ analysis. Most analysts agree that at least some of the “terrorists” have been brought to Kazakhstan from abroad, but prefer not to make guesses about the identities of the alleged foreign instigators of the crisis. In the words of Askar Nursha, “Kazakhstan has got into a rabbit hole. It is beyond comprehension who pushed it there” (Nursha, 2022c). The opposing discursive position is offered by Ashimbayev who does not hesitate to accuse the United States, the UK, and the West in general of being interested in fomenting instability in Kazakhstan. Accordingly, Massimov, despite his long-standing reputation of excessively sympathizing with China, abruptly turns out to be a pro-Western politician acting “in the interest of his Western partners” (Ashimbayev, 2022m). However, Ashimbayev’s anti-Western diatribes remain a lone voice in the wilderness, as his fellow political analysts largely concur in seeing the “New Kazakhstan” as cooperative with the West.

In the expert reconstructions of the January crisis, surprisingly little attention is given to the institutions of the Kazakhstani state and civil society. The parliament and the judiciary are left out of the picture. Tokayev’s decision to dismiss the government has elicited almost no comments, and the disgraced Prime Minister Mamin is hardly ever mentioned. The “helplessness” of *Nur Otan*, the ruling party, is noted in passing (Kaliev, 2022c), but other parties represented in the parliament are evidently deemed irrelevant. Apart from the NSC and the army, the institutions that matter are the Presidency and the Chairmanship of the National Security Council. The turning point is the transfer of the latter position from Nazarbayev to Tokayev. Expert accounts differ on how it happened. Most analysts do not dispute the official version that Nazarbayev volunteered to hand over the Chairmanship to the President, but some of them emphasize that Tokayev “firmly raised this question” (Abishev, 2022h). In essence, Kazakhstan’s power drama

appears to be a story of a few individuals and their opaque relationships rather than of societal actors.

The analysis of the expert discourse reveals another underlying dichotomy, “the strong” versus “the weak.” Political analysts try to convey the image of Kazakhstan as a strong state headed by the strong and resolute President. Tokayev’s “political courage, determination and sense of responsibility” (Ashimbayev, 2022g) are contrasted with Nazarbayev’s frailty and the rapid disintegration of Massimov’s conspiracy. However, the experts seem to be profoundly uneasy about these claims. How could a strong and stable state appear, in a matter of a few days, at the brink of a national catastrophe? Why did the security services and armed forces with sufficient combat power and capabilities need the help of the CSTO peacekeepers? What are the sources of Tokayev’s “strength” and his foes’ “weakness?” These questions remain unanswered. From time to time, the expert discourse slides into conveying the image of Kazakhstan as a vulnerable state with weak institutions and disoriented elites. While the direct acknowledgments that “Kazakhstan is a weak state” (Abishev, 2022d) are rare, the experts’ deep concern about the fragility of Kazakhstan’s statehood permeates the discourse of Tokayev’s victory over the retrograde “old elites.”

Conclusion

As the analysis provided above has shown, the dominant expert discourse of the January crisis relies on the dichotomy of “the old” versus “the new.” Most of the analysts see the “New Kazakhstan” prevailing over the “old” order represented by the “old elites” sometimes referred to as *agashki*, figures wielding considerable behind-the-scenes influence and putting their egotistic interests above those of the society (Yedilov, 2022). In this sense, the “bloody January” is simultaneously a trauma and a watershed moment in the country’s recent history, the birth of the “Second Republic” and the end of the Nazarbayev epoch. Understandably, the expert discourse displays a tendency to consign the “birth trauma” to oblivion, to devote a diminishing share of attention to the events of January and to concentrate on Tokayev’s reforms and an array of foreign policy and economic challenges Kazakhstan has to confront after February 24. Apparently, Kazakhstani analysts do not see much sense in trying to get to the bottom of what happened in January, contenting themselves with reproducing the rare and fragmentary news about the official investigation provided by the government spokespeople. The greater the symbolic distance from January crisis, the better for the integrity of the dominant discourse. Within the Kazakhstani expert community, no alternative interpretations of the January crisis have been suggested.

The almost universal acceptance of the framework based on “the old” versus “the new” dichotomy provides for the

relative homogeneity of the expert discourse. In many respects, it mirrors the official discourse, reinforcing the images of the “thousands of terrorists,” the “hybrid attack against Kazakhstan “and the treacherous “siloviki” plotting to seize the power. Tokayev’s account of the immediate reason that pushed the conspirators to move from planning the coup “for years” to implementing the scenario of power grab was not, however, repeated by the political analysts. The President’s story of “the radical modernization and transformation” launched under his leadership that the “influential people” had decided to thwart (Tokayev, 2022) sounded too far-fetched to be integrated into the expert discourse. The superficial changes introduced to Kazakhstan’s political system from 2019 to 2021 could hardly endanger the positions of the old elites.

The expert discourse is less homogeneous when it has to contextualize the role of Russia in the events of January. The representation of Russia is fluid, it is both an ally that has provided a critically important support to President Tokayev and a threat to Kazakhstan’s sovereignty. The very fact that Russia’s interference has played a crucial role in deciding the outcome of the January crisis emphasizes Kazakhstan’s vulnerability. Gaziz Abishev, the editor-in-chief of the independent news agency *Turan Times*, compares Moscow’s observation of the developments in Kazakhstan with the gaze of “the Eye of Sauron” and advises the Kazakhstani elite to stop irritating Russia unnecessarily and to slip out of its focus (Abishev, 2022f). It is noteworthy how little sympathy, let alone “gratitude” for sending the CSTO forces to Kazakhstan, Russia elicits among Kazakhstani political analysts.

The expert discourse seeks to dovetail the dichotomies of “the old” versus “the new” and “the weak” versus “the strong” with each other. At the same time, the discourse conveys the analysts’ apprehension that the dichotomies might stand in a reverse relation: “the old” might in fact be “the strong” and “the new” might be “the weak.” The uneasiness about the real impact and the long-term outcomes of Tokayev’s reforms and even the fears of the “restoration” of the old order (Kaliev, 2022a) permeate the expert discourse, making it more heterogeneous than it looks on the surface. Russia’s future role is another source of deep disquietude: the external power which is mostly seen as essentially anti-modern and not particularly respectful of Kazakhstan’s sovereignty supported the forces of “the new.” Might it choose to act differently next time? If this were the case, would “the new” appear to be “strong” enough?

The difficulty with identifying the actors of the January power drama is another stumbling block disrupting the homogeneity of the expert discourse. As the wide-scale social conflict boils down to a collision between the incarnated Good and the amorphous Evil represented by the hapless Massimov who, as it is commonly acknowledged,

could not have masterminded the conspiracy but still has been appointed the main culprit, the resulting picture looks more like a political myth about the birth of a “new Kazakhstan” than a reconstruction of the causes, actors, and consequences of the January crisis.

Declaration of conflicting interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author(s) disclosed receipt of the following financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article: This study was supported by the Tomsk State University Development Programme («Priority-2030»).

References

- Abishev, G. (2022a). *Kasatelno Togo, kak organizovanno protestnaya volna zakhlestnula goroda Kazakhstana [Regarding the question of how the protest wave swept the cities of Kazakhstan in an organized way]*. Telegram. <https://t.me/gaziz1984/2710> (accessed 23 August 2022).
- Abishev, G. (2022b). *Nesmotrja na obrashhenie v ODKB, vsju osnovnuju tjazhjoluju rabotu vsjo zhe dolzhny sdelat' kazakhstanskije oficery [Despite the address to the CSTO, Kazakhstani officers are to conduct the main difficult work]*. Telegram. <https://t.me/gaziz1984/2720> (accessed 20 August 2022).
- Abishev, G. (2022c). *Po slovam prezidenta Tokaeva, vokrug Ak-Ordy nachali sobirat'sya terroristicheskie gruppy, gotovyje k shturmu [In president Tokayev's words, terrorist groups ready for assault began to amass around Ak-Orda]*. Telegram. <https://t.me/gaziz1984/2741> (accessed 23 August 2022).
- Abishev, G. (2022d). *Predstavliaetsia, chto razgovory o vozmozhnykh sanktsiiakhv otnoshenii Kazakhstana so storony Velikobritanii za sotrudnichestvo s Rossiei v kakom-to smysle mogut byt' na ruku Astane [It appears that discussions about possible British sanctions against Kazakhstan for its cooperation with Russia might in some sense play into Astana's hands]*. Telegram. <https://t.me/gaziz1984/2998> (accessed 24 August 2022).
- Abishev, G. (2022e). *Privlechenie ODKB - jeto skoree signal o tom, chto strany-sojuzniki podderzhivajut dejstvujushhij konstitucionnyj rezhim, a ne teh, kto zhelaet ego sverzhenija [The involvement of the CSTO is*

- more a sign of support of the current constitutional regime by the allies but not by those who would like to withdraw it]. Telegram. <https://t.me/gaziz1984/2725> (accessed 20 August 2022).
- Abishev, G. (2022f). *Rossiiane pochemu tak iarostno atakuyut novogo ministra informatsii Umarova? [Why do Russians attack the new minister of information Umarov so ferociously?]*. Telegram. <https://t.me/gaziz1984/2809> (accessed 23 August 2022).
- Abishev, G. (2022g). *V mnogochislennykh razgovorakh s Putinyem rechi o vozmozhnom dolge ne bylo [There was no possible debt mentioned in numerous talks to Putin]*. Telegram. <https://t.me/gaziz1984/2880> (accessed 20 August 2022).
- Abishev, G. (2022h). *Vopros o peredache dolzhnosti predsedatelia sovbeza RK byl reshen na khodu [The question of the RK security council chairmanship transfer was resolved along the way]*. Telegram. <https://t.me/gaziz1984/2881> (accessed 24 August 2022).
- Ashimbayev, D. (2022a). *Byudzhnet KNB sostavliat v 2015 godu [soglasno zakonu] 163 mlrd. Tenge [The NSC budget in 2015 amounted to 163 billion Tenge [according to the law]*. Telegram. <https://t.me/dashimbayev/1797> (accessed 23 August 2022).
- Ashimbayev, D. (2022b). *Diskussija o "mirnom haraktere" Janvarskih sobytij ne utihaet [There are still debates developed on the 'peaceful' mode of January events]*. Telegram. <https://t.me/dashimbayev/1610> (accessed 20 August 2022).
- Ashimbayev, D. (2022c). *Hochetsja napomnit', chto banditsko-terroristicheskoe napadenie v janvare s.g. bylo otrazheno pod rukovodstvom Tokaeva pri polnoj podderzhke Nazarbajeva, kotoryj peredal emu vse brazdy pravlenija [I would like to remind that the attack by bandits and terrorists in January was dealt with under Tokayev presidency and supported by Nazarbajev who provided the power to him]*. Telegram. <https://t.me/dashimbayev/1690> (accessed 20 August 2022).
- Ashimbayev, D. (2022d). *Itak, Kassym-Zhomart Tokaev vzjal na sebja vsju polnotu vlasti [Thus, Kassym-Jomart Tokayev took the entire power]*. Telegram. <https://t.me/dashimbayev/1522> (accessed 20 August 2022).
- Ashimbayev, D. (2022e). *Kot i evroparlament [A cat and the European parliament]*. Telegram. <https://t.me/dashimbayev/1671> (accessed 20 August 2022).
- Ashimbayev, D. (2022f). *K voprosu o sem'e pervogo prezidenta [On the question of the first president's family]*. Telegram. <https://t.me/dashimbayev/1965> (accessed 23 August 2022).
- Ashimbayev, D. (2022g). *Mezhdunarodnaia obshchestvenost' uporno vidit v boevikakh iskluchitel'no "mirnykh protestuyushchikh [The "international public" obstinately sees the militants exclusively as "peaceful protesters"]]*. Telegram. <https://t.me/dashimbayev/1530> (accessed 24 August 2022).
- Ashimbayev, D. (2022h). *Mnogie zadayutsia voprosom o roli rukovodstva KNB v etikh sobytiikh [Many people wonder about the role of the NSC leadership in these events]*. Telegram. <https://t.me/dashimbayev/1611> (accessed 23 August 2022).
- Ashimbayev, D. (2022i). *O novom kazahstane i vtoroj respublike [on new Kazakhstan and the second republic]*. Telegram. <https://t.me/dashimbayev/1972> (accessed 20 August 2022).
- Ashimbayev, D. (2022j). *Skladyvaetsya vpechatlenie, chto ochen' mnogie zainteresovany v tom, chtoby vydat' uchastnikov massovykh besporyadkov v Almaty i riade drugikh regionov za mirnykh protestuyushchikh [There is an impression that there are many who are interested in passing off the participants of mass riots in Almaty and a number of other regions as peaceful protesters]*. Telegram. <https://t.me/dashimbayev/1606> (accessed 23 August 2022).
- Ashimbayev, D. (2022k). *V pravitel'stve stalo bol'she na odnogo vice-prem'era [There has become one more vice-minister in the government]*. Telegram. <https://t.me/dashimbayev/2004> (accessed 20 August 2022).
- Ashimbayev, D. (2022l). *V poslednee vremya poyavilos' nemalo figure i figurochek, kotorye ochen' khotiat, chtoby Kazakhstan srochno possorilsya s Rossiei [Recently, a number of figures and figurines have emerged who want Kazakhstan to get into a quarrel with Russia as soon as possible]*. Telegram. <https://t.me/dashimbayev/1885> (accessed 23 August 2022).
- Ashimbayev, D. (2022m). *Vspomnilos', kak tri goda nazad odin taksist vozmushchalsia [It came to my mind how annoyed one taxi driver was three years ago]*. Telegram. <https://t.me/dashimbayev/1933> (accessed 23 August 2022).
- Bokae, S. (2022a). *Nurlan Nigmatulin, Baurzhan Baibek and marat Beketaev yavliaiutsa... [Nurlan Nigmatulin, Baurzhan Baibek and marat Beketaev are...]*. Telegram. <https://t.me/BokaeVS/190> (accessed 20 August 2022).
- Bokae, S. (2022b). *Reaktsia novogo prezidenta Tokayeva... [The reaction of the new President Tokayev...]*. Telegram. <https://t.me/BokaeVS/188> (accessed 20 August 2022).
- Bokae, S. (2022c). *Schitayu, chto ministr vnutrennikh del E. Turgumbaev I gueneralniy prokuror G. Nurdauletov dolzhny uyti v otstavku [I believe that Minister of internal Affairs E. Turgumbaev and Attorney General G. Nurdauletov should resign]*. <https://t.me/BokaeVS/198> (accessed 20 August 2022).
- Cornell, S. (2022). Learning from Kazakhstan's January crisis. <http://www.cacianalyst.org/publications/feature-articles/item/13715-learning-from-kazakhstan-january-crisis.html> (accessed 20 August 2022).
- du Boulay, S., & Isaacs, R. (2019). Legitimacy and legitimation in Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan. In R. Isaacs & A. Frigerio (Eds.), *Theorizing central Asian politics: The state, ideology and power* (pp. 17–42). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Foucault, M. (1978). *The history of sexuality volume I: An introduction*. Pantheon Books.

- Institute of Applied Research. (2022). *Mission*. Academy of Public Administration. <https://www.apa.kz/en/center-for-applied-research-and-international-partnership/> (accessed 23 August 2022).
- Interfax. (2022). *KNB Kazakhstana soobshchil, chto plemyannik Nazarbaeva prodolzhaet rabotat' v spetssluzhbe [NSC of Kazakhstan informs that Nazarbayev's nephew continues to work in the special service]*. Interfax News Agency. <https://www.interfax.ru/world/814322> (accessed 23 August 2022).
- Isaacs, R. (2022). *Political opposition in authoritarianism: Exit, voice and loyalty in Kazakhstan*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Jäger, S. (1993). *Kritische Diskursanalyse: eine Einführung*. Duisburg: DISS Verlag.
- Jäger, S. (1999). Einen Königsweg gibt es nicht. Bemerkungen zur Durchführung von Diskursanalysen. In *Das Wuchern der Diskurse. Perspektiven der Diskursanalyse Foucaults* (pp. 136–147). Frankfurt: Campus Verlag.
- Jäger, S. (2001). Discourse and knowledge: Theoretical and methodological aspects of a critical discourse and dispositive analysis. In R. Wodak & M. Meyer (Eds.), *Methods of critical discourse analysis* (pp. 32–62). Sage.
- Jørgensen, M., & Phillips, L. J. (2002). *Discourse analysis as theory and method*. Sage Publications.
- Kabuldinov, Z. (2022a). *Mir i soglasie v Kazakhstane – prevyshe vsego! [Peace and unity in Kazakhstan are above all]*. Facebook. <https://facebook.com/kabulzia/posts/2975223369455081> (accessed 23 August 2022).
- Kabuldinov, Z. (2022b). *Novomu kazahstanu – novoe poslanie prezidenta [the new presidential message to new Kazakhstan]*. Facebook. <https://facebook.com/kabulzia/posts/3025139411130143> (accessed 21 August 2022).
- Kaliyev, T. (2022a). *Posle putcha... [After the putsch...]*. Telegram. <https://t.me/kaliyevchannel/1872> (accessed 24 August 2022).
- Kaliyev, T. (2022b). *Protest ili terror? [Protest or terror?]*. Telegram. <https://t.me/kaliyevchannel/1848> (accessed 21 August 2022).
- Kaliyev, T. (2022c). *Udastsia li izmenit' partiyu vlasti? [Will the attempts to change the ruling party succeed?]*. Telegram. <https://t.me/kaliyevchannel/1912> (accessed 23 August 2022).
- Kaliyev, T. (2022d). *Umestna li v novom Kazahstane staraya partiya? [Is the old party appropriate in the new Kazakhstan?]*. Telegram. <https://t.me/kaliyevchannel/1878> (accessed 24 August 2022).
- Kaliyev, T. (2022e). *Vyzovy dlja Tokaeva [challenges to Tokayev]*. Telegram. <https://t.me/kaliyevchannel/1880> (accessed 20 August 2022).
- Kaliyev, T. (2022f). *Vyzovy novomu Kazahstanu [challenges to new Kazakhstan]*. Telegram. <https://t.me/kaliyevchannel/1921> (accessed 20 August 2022).
- Karin, E. (2022a). *Kak uzhe neodnokratno govorilos', missiia ODKB iskluchitel'no mirotvorcheskaia [As has already been said many times, the CSTO mission is exclusively peace-keeping]*. Telegram. <https://t.me/erlankarin/600> (accessed 23 August 2022).
- Karin, E. (2022b). *O novom Kazahstane i vtoroj respublike [on the new Kazakhstan and the second republic]*. Telegram. <https://t.me/erlankarin/606> (accessed 20 August 2022).
- Karin, E. (2022c). *V chem zakliuchaetsa kliuchevoy posyl vcherashnego vystupleniya glavy gosudarstva? [What is the key message of yesterday's speech by the head of state?]*. Telegram. <https://t.me/erlankarin/601> (accessed 23 August 2022).
- Kazinform. (2022). *Kassym-Zhomart Tokaev vystupil s obrashcheniem k narodu Kazakhstana [Kassym-Jomart Tokayev addresses the people of Kazakhstan]*. Kazinform News Agency. https://www.inform.kz/ru/kasym-zhomart-tokaev-vystupil-s-obrascheniem-k-narodu-kazahstana_a3881726 (accessed 23 August 2022).
- Kudaibergenova, D., & Laruelle, M. (2022). Making sense of the January 2022 protests in Kazakhstan: Failing legitimacy, culture of protests, and elite readjustments. *Post-Soviet Affairs*. <https://www.tandfonline.com/action/showCitFormats?doi=10.1080/1060586X.2022.2077060>
- Kudaibergenova, D. T. (2016). The use and abuse of postcolonial discourses in post-independent Kazakhstan. *Europe-Asia Studies*, 68(5), 917–935. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09668136.2016.1194967>
- Libman, A., & Davidzon, I. (2023). Military intervention as a spectacle? Authoritarian regionalism and protests in Kazakhstan. *International Affairs*, 99(3), 1293–1312. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iad093>
- Nursha, A. (2022a). *Chto my poluchili v suhom ostatke posle Janvar'skih sobytij? [What have we got left after January events?]* Facebook. <https://facebook.com/askar.nursha/posts/6766913433380598> (accessed 20 August 2022).
- Nursha, A. (2022b). *Obrashhenie vlastej Kazakhstana za pomoshh'ju v ODKB budet bol'shoj politicheskoy oshibkoj [Address to the CSTO by Kazakhstani authorities will be a great political mistake]*. Facebook. <https://facebook.com/askar.nursha/posts/6672282429510366> (accessed 21 August 2022).
- Nursha, A. (2022c). *V Almaty podkluchili internet [Internet has been turned on in Almaty]*. Facebook. <https://facebook.com/askar.nursha/posts/6693853957353213> (accessed 23 August 2022).
- Sarym, A. (2022a). *162 cheloveka ili 0,001% naseleniya vladeyut 55% bogatstva Kazakhstana [162 people or 0.001% of the population own 55% of Kazakhstan's wealth]*. Telegram. <https://t.me/aidossarym/1704> (accessed 20 August 2022).
- Sarym, A. (2022b). *Po kazahstanskoy rezolutsii Evroparlamenta I otvetu MIDa RK [about the Kazakhtan resolution of the European parliament and the response of the ministry of foreign affairs of the republic of Kazakhstan]*. Telegram. <https://t.me/aidossarym/1713> (accessed 20 August 2022).
- Schröter, M., & Taylor, Ch. (2018). *Exploring silence and absence in discourse: Empirical approaches*. Palgrave Macmillan.

- Socor, V. (2015). *Kazakhstan: An island of stability in a turbulent region*. Institute for Security and Development Policy. <https://www.isdp.eu/content/uploads/images/stories/isdp-main-pdf/2015-socor-kazakhstan-an-island-of-stability-in-a-turbulent-region.pdf> (accessed 23 August 2022).
- Tengrinews. (2022). *Gossekreter' Erlan Karin raz'iasnil znachenie termina "vtoraia respublika" [state secretary Erlan Karin explains the meaning of the term "the second republic"]*. Tengrinews Agency. https://tengrinews.kz/kazakhstan_news/gossekreter-erlan-karin-razyyasnil-znachenie-termina-vtoraya-464746/ (accessed 23 August 2022).
- Thibault, H., & Tastaibek, N. (2023). Foreign terrorists and Kyrgyz Jazzmen: Framing the January 2022 unrest in Kazakhstan. In J.-F. Caron (Ed.), *A revolt in the steppe: Understanding Kazakhstan's January events of 2022* (pp. 79–100). Springer.
- Tokayev, K.-J. (2022). *State-of-the-Nation address by president of the republic of Kazakhstan Kassym-Jomart Tokayev*. <https://www.akorda.kz/en/state-of-the-nation-address-by-president-of-the-republic-of-kazakhstan-kassym-jomart-tokayev-17293> (accessed 26 August 2022).
- von Soest, Ch., & Grauvogel, J. (2015). Comparing Legitimation Strategies in Post-Soviet Countries. In *Comparing Legitimation Strategies in Post-Soviet Countries* (pp. 18–46). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Yedilov, E. (2022). *Nepravil'no, chto "Agashki", kotorym chut' li ne 70 let, "do sikh por derzhatsia za svoi kreslsa" [It is wrong that "Agashki" who are almost 70 still cling to their positions]*. Telegram. <https://t.me/yedilov/36693> (accessed 24 August 2022).