
Kazakh-Russian border in the context of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19)

Abstract. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic and the current sanitary and epidemiological situation have affected the functions of the Kazakh-Russian border and the development of cross-border cooperation between Kazakhstan and Russia.

The article is devoted to the correlation of such functions of the Kazakh-Russian border as cross-border mobility and barrier function. Due to the development of Eurasian integration and the launch of the Eurasian Economic Union, the role of cross-border cooperation between Kazakhstan and Russia has increased, and the function of cross-border mobility has intensified because the border regions are the entry points for the movement of goods, services, capital, and labor. The factors of the transition of the Kazakh-Russian border from the 'connecting'¹ to the 'integrational' type have taken shape. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has not only slowed down this process but also strengthened the barrier function of the Kazakh-Russian border, reducing business activity and humanitarian ties in the border regions.

The author comes to the following conclusions: Kazakhstan and Russia need to develop a common policy to respond to the spread of the pandemic and minimize its consequences, ensure food and biological security of border regions, create an algorithm for organizing «green corridors» for exporters, and «transit corridors» for migrants, to develop measures to preserve the contact function of the Kazakh-Russian border even in conditions of its partial or complete closure through modern means of communication.

Keywords: Kazakh-Russian border, cross-border mobility, barrier function, Eurasian integration, cross-border cooperation, connecting the border, integration border, cross-border interactions.

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Introduction

The state border is an important feature of the sovereignty of the country and the consistency of the state. Over the 30 years of post-Soviet development, Kazakhstan and Russia have come a long way of defining state borders, the process

of delimitation and demarcation of borders, the development of various formats of cross-border cooperation, and the creation of border institutions. At the same time, as the COVID-19 pandemic has shown, this path has not yet been fully covered since the countries were unprepared for the sudden closure of state borders.

¹ The border with a developed transport network, which play an important role in foreign trade

Cross-border cooperation is a special form of interstate interaction between countries sharing common borders. The main designation of cross-border cooperation implies strengthening relations between countries through economic, trade, cultural, humanitarian relations of bordering areas; ensuring sustainable development of the border areas; promoting the growth of the well-being of the population participating in cross-border cooperation of the regions.

Depending on the nature of these relations, the influence of state borders on the development of border regions can manifest itself in the form of such basic functions as barrier and contact. Barrier isolation implies the protection of the interests of national producers and consumers in the spirit of the state protectionism policy. On the contrary, the contact is expressed in the greater openness for people, goods, services, or capital mobility across borders.

Several factors affect the implementation of the contact function. These include the legislative and legal framework of countries; interstate economic and humanitarian relations development level; the state of the institutions involved in ensuring bilateral and multilateral international relations (these include Chambers of Commerce and official representative offices of states, regions, or intermediary companies, etc.); transport and logistics infrastructure development level. Also, the level of economic development of the border areas themselves, their involvement in international relations have a direct impact on the said processes. Accordingly, if the economy of border regions is in the doldrums, not only the development of bilateral interstate relations is hindered, but also a country is derived from entering the global trade processes.

In the presence of severe contradictions, contact gives way to the barrier which significantly complicates the processes of mutually beneficial trade and cooperation of national economic systems. And, on the contrary, stable socio-

economic relations and cultural diversity lead to vanishing barriers in the borderlands and the manifestation of contact bonding the territories themselves and their populations as close as possible.

Discussion

A border is a place where the vital activities of societies of states intersect, many trends in interstate relations are especially noticeable, foreign policy, economic, humanitarian relations take place. In addition, cross-border cooperation contributes to the solution of certain complex issues of interstate relations, even that undecided at the highest state power level.

With the development of Eurasian integration and the launch of the Eurasian Economic Union, the role of cross-border cooperation is increasing. It is the border regions that are the entry points for goods, services, capital, and labor mobility.

The borderlands of Kazakhstan and Russia include 7 Kazakhstani regions and 12 Russian regions located along with one of the longest land borders in the world (7512 km). With the launch of the Customs Union and the Common Economic Space of the EurAsEC, these regions received additional incentives for development due to the removal of customs and some other restrictions on the border. In 2010 -2012, the increase in the turnover of border regions, the number of joint campaigns, and investments from Russia to Kazakhstan and from Kazakhstan to Russia was observed².

With the beginning of the activities of the Eurasian Economic Union, a new stage in the development of border and interregional cooperation begins. Within the framework of the EAEU, a general Concept for the Development of Border Regions has not yet been developed, as has been done, for example, within the framework of the CIS³. However, the adoption of the new EAEU Customs Code, the intention to create a common good, services, labor, and

² Таможенный союз и приграничное сотрудничество Казахстана и России. – Санкт-Петербург, 2012. – С. 6-7.

capital market directly affects the development of cross-border and interregional cooperation.

Adhering to the functional principle of defining the role of borders and their typology proposed by the Russian researcher V.A. Kolosov, the Kazakh-Russian border in the new conditions of the Eurasian integration development should have passed from the "connecting" type to the "integration" type [Kolosov, 2005].

"Connecting borders", in his opinion, imply the presence of stable alliances, joint participation in organizations, the formation of long-term common interests, the development of a kind of culture of border regions. Borders of this type are open, the cross-border flows go not only at the interstate but also the local level. The states pursue a special regional policy aimed at the development of border regions on a bilateral or multilateral basis. These borders are zones of innovation.

The highest type of border development, according to V.A. Kolosov - is integration borders. They imply the presence of a common regional strategy, the absence of restrictions on the borders, and they appear at the stage of completion of the formation of a single economic space. Typical processes for this type of border are the elimination of barriers and prejudices, the formation of special governing bodies in cross-border regions.

The logic of the development of the Eurasian Economic Union was supposed to lead to the fact that the Kazakh-Russian border could become an integration one.

However, the COVID-19 pandemic has made significant changes to the functional characteristics of the state border between Kazakhstan and Russia. The response to the spread of the virus varied. A state of emergency was introduced in Kazakhstan, with a curfew throughout the country from March 16, 2020. A hybrid regime was in effect in Russia, which was called differently during two months: the

first week was called non-working days regime; further - self-isolation regime and high alert regime in the regions (at the discretion of the regional authorities); at the beginning of May - restrictions regime. But the decision on the borders in Russia and Kazakhstan was the same - the closure.

On March 16, 2020, in connection with the announcement of the coronavirus infection COVID-19 pandemics by the World Health Organization, the government of Kazakhstan closed the Kazakh-Russian state border⁴. Regular air traffic, rail, and road traffic were stopped. Russia also in connection with the coronavirus pandemic, has stopped regular and charter flights with other countries, including the Republic of Kazakhstan, starting from March 27, 2020.

Citizens of the Russian Federation who were at that time on the territory of the Republic of Kazakhstan and citizens of Kazakhstan who had a Russian temporary residence permit (TRP) or a residence permit (residence permit) could return to the territory of the Russian Federation only on exportation flights specially organized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia from the cities of Nur-Sultan and Almaty. Export flights could be used by Russian citizens who had left the Russian Federation only after January 1, 2020, and had registered on the State Services portal.

Accordingly, citizens of the Republic of Kazakhstan and Russian citizens with a Kazakhstani TRP or a residence permit, who had found themselves in the territory of Russia, could return to Kazakhstan on exportation flights organized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan from Moscow.

Almost a month and a half were spent by the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and the Embassies of Russia and Kazakhstan in cooperation with the security authorities and sanitary and epidemiological services of the two countries to resolve all issues related to the possibility of organization of exportation flights and charter

³ Решение о Концепции межрегионального и приграничного сотрудничества государств-участников Содружества Независимых Государств от 15 сентября 2004 года <http://www.consultant.ru/cons/cgi/online.cgi?req=doc;base=INT;n=43259#09749074962064914>

⁴ О временном изменении порядка пересечения российско-казахстанской государственной границы с 16 марта 2020 года https://www.mid.ru/ru/maps/kz/-/asset_publisher/44tjMzWwjAFr/content/id/4086903

aircraft flights. The exportation of citizens was carried out on a commercial basis, the pricing policy was determined by the airlines themselves. Previously purchased tickets were not eligible for these flights. And only selected airlines later returned money for purchased tickets for canceled flights in the form of certificates. Citizens arriving from the Republic of Kazakhstan had to be isolated for two weeks at the place of registration.

From September 21, 2020, Russia resumed international flights with Kazakhstan, and, accordingly, the program of exportation flights for Russians was canceled due to the resumption of international flights.

As for the procedure for crossing the Kazakh-Russian border by land, until now the border remains closed, except for persons with diplomatic passports, citizens heading for treatment, and students.

During the pandemic, the lack of coordination of national measures related to the border led to significant difficulties in informing the population and communicating with business and society. As a result, it became difficult for carriers and suppliers to cross the border.

There were problems with the supply of food across the border. Due to the introduction of a state of emergency in Kazakhstan, the Head of State ordered to prevent a shortage of socially important goods and to ensure their irreducible stock, therefore the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) introduced regulations on the export of some goods. Restrictions on the export of some goods in Kazakhstan were introduced to ensure food security based on the Order of the Minister of Agriculture of the Republic of Kazakhstan «On the introduction of a ban on the export of certain goods from the territory of the

Republic of Kazakhstan to third countries» dated March 22, 2020, No. 103⁵. The restriction was to be temporary for the duration of the state of emergency in Kazakhstan. The list of prohibited products included: buckwheat, wheat or wheat-rye flour, cabbage, carrots, turnips, beets, onions, sugar, sunflower seeds, and sunflower oil. This measure is a non-tariff regulation measure that was introduced to prevent a critical shortage of food products in the domestic market during an emergency.

At the same time, food suppliers did not always promptly and timely receive up-to-date and objective information about the restrictions imposed. For example, shipments of local vegetables, in particular cabbage, from the southern regions of Kazakhstan to the Russian Federation were disrupted. The official message of the ministry stated: «Some Kazakhstani farmers did not get acquainted with the information from official sources or misunderstood it. The Ministry of Agriculture is forced to reiterate: the ban on the export of cabbage, both too far and near abroad, was not planned and was not introduced. The export of cabbage is allowed, including to the territory of Russia»⁶.

Changes have also taken place in the supply of medical devices and pharmaceuticals. On the one hand, measures were taken to improve the situation. Within the framework of the EAEU, personal protective means, disinfectants, materials for their production, laboratory reagents, vaccines, pharmaceutical substances, medical freezers, containers, thermal bags, endoscopes, non-contact thermometers, disposable pipettes, mobile disinfection units were exempted from customs duties⁷. In addition, the list of goods used to produce medicines, as well as medical

5 «О введении запрета на вывоз отдельных товаров с территории Республики Казахстан в третьи страны» // <https://atameken.kz/ru/news/35221-kazahstan-vvel-vremennyj-zapret-na-eksport-osnovnyh-produktov-pitaniya>

6 На юге Казахстана крестьяне не могут сбить урожай капусты. МСХ говорит, что запрета на экспорт нет // <https://informburo.kz/novosti/na-yuge-kazahstana-krestyane-ne-mogut-sbyt-urozhay-kapusty-msh-govorit-cto-zapreta-na-eksport-net.html>; «Капуста пропадает». Казахстанским фермерам ответил Минсельхоз https://tengrinews.kz/kazahstan_news/kapusta-propadaet-kazahstanskim-fermeram-otvetil-minselhoz-398155/

7 Решение Коллегии Евразийской экономической комиссии от 24 марта 2020 г. N 41 «О внесении изменений в Решение Коллегии Евразийской экономической комиссии от 21 апреля 2015 г. N 30 «О мерах нетарифного регулирования» <https://www.alta.ru/tamdoc/20kr0041/>

supplies (thermal bags, films for sealing bottles, medical freezers) has been expanded. The import of these from March 16 to September 30, 2020, was duty-free, subject to confirmation of the intended purpose of such goods by authorized health authorities.

On the other hand, the executive authorities introduced additional restrictions. The Ministry of Health of the Republic of Kazakhstan, by Order No. 56-NK dated 20.02.2020, introduced a ban on the export of personal protective means⁸. Decree of the Government of the Russian Federation of 02.03.2020 No. 223 for a period until June 1, 2020, established a temporary ban on the export of certain types of products according to the approved list which could be used as a means of preventing the spread of new coronavirus infection. Those included aerosol respirators, disposable chemical coveralls protection, anti-plague reusable suits, shoe covers, masks, gauze, bandages, disinfectants, medical gloves, medical masks, etc.

In practice, it turned out that it was practically impossible to carry personal protective means, drugs, including antibiotics, antiviral drugs, antipyretics, across the border of Russia and Kazakhstan. Exceptions were made only for the delivery of humanitarian supplies. For example, within the framework of the Good Neighborhood action initiated by Russian non-profit organizations in the border regions from July to August 2020 humanitarian assistance was provided in the amount of more than 14.5 million tenge (or 2.5 million rubles)⁹. The humanitarian cargo was delivered from the cities of Moscow, Astrakhan, Yekaterinburg, Saratov, Orenburg, Kazan, and Ufa to the cities of Nur-Sultan, Almaty, Uralsk, Aksai, Aktau, Pavlodar, Ust-Kamenogorsk.

A crisis arose with labor migrants who were in Russia at the time of the pandemic outbreak willing to cross the Kazakh-Russian border. The main restrictions affected migration mobility

because the main goal of states was to minimize personal contacts of the population and to prevent the spread of the virus through closing borders and stopping or reducing traffic by all modes of transport. Many citizens and migrants could not get reliable information on available ways to cross the border.

Kazakhstan and Russia liberalized migration legislation in the field of residence and access to the labor market for foreign citizens during the COVID-19 pandemic they automatically extended the validity of patents, visas, work permits for foreigners, the duration of stay of foreigners, and deportation and expulsion were also suspended.

However, most migrants unexpectedly lost their jobs, and some did not even receive a paycheck. Many migrants, having lost their jobs, lost the opportunity to pay for housing, many of them did not have medical insurance and were afraid of contracting the COVID-19 virus. The authorities' policy of isolating migrants in hostels in the event of detection of COVID-19 and a ban on going out even for groceries also exacerbated the situation. The language barrier in communication with doctors was another problem arisen; many non-Russian-speaking migrants could not explain their state of health to ambulance doctors and receive qualified assistance.

Therefore, migrants from Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan began to independently move from Moscow and other regions to the border regions of the Russian Federation with the hope of crossing the border of Russia and Kazakhstan, but they found themselves in a stalemate because of the coronavirus infection restrictions and the closure of borders for crossing. Migrants came from different regions of Russia and demanded to create a corridor through the territory of Kazakhstan to return to their homelands.

⁸ Приказ № 56-НК 20.02.2020 от «О запрете выдачи разрешений на вывоз средств индивидуальной защиты» <https://www.alta.ru/tamdoc/20kz0056/>

⁹ «Добро-Соседство»: Российские общественники прислали в Казахстан гуманитарную помощь на 14,5 млн тенге <https://toppress.kz/article/dobro-sosedstvo-rossiiskie-obsh-estvenniki-prislali-v-kazakhstan-gumanitarnuyu-pomosh-na-145-mln-tenge>

Results

As a result, several thousand migrants were forced to live in spontaneously organized tent camps in the Orenburg, Samara regions, and the Republic of Bashkortostan waiting for a solution to the Russian-Kazakh border opening issues and the possibility of transit through the territory of Kazakhstan. The situation was aggravated by the spread of the COVID-19 infection, the unsanitary conditions the migrants were placed, and there was also a real threat of an exacerbation of the interethnic situation or forceful storming of border points.

The Ministries of Foreign Affairs, embassies, and consulates, as well as sanitary and epidemiological services of Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan joined actions to resolve the situation. From May to September 2020, six transit corridors were organized from Russia through Kazakhstan via which migrants were able to return home.

The COVID-19 pandemic and the restrictions imposed undoubtedly affected the development of trade and economic cooperation between the border regions of Russia and Kazakhstan, negatively affecting the development of humanitarian interactions and maintaining the level of communication between people. The barrier function of the Russian-Kazakh border has increased, and the contact function has been reduced to a minimum over the past 30 years.

The further prospects for the implementation of the EAEU's medium-term goals the implementation of the strategy of the Eurasian Economic Union until 2025, create completely new conditions for the development of cross-border and interregional cooperation. At the same time, it is necessary to draw significant conclusions from the analysis of the situation related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Conclusion

In the future, it is necessary to develop a common policy to respond to the spread of the pandemic and implement joint measures to combat its consequences, to develop an

understandable and quick way to organize 'green corridors' for exporters from Russia and Kazakhstan and 'transit corridors' for migrants. These procedures should not take several months. Decisions should be prompt.

Kazakhstan and Russia need to adapt their regional development programs to meet modern challenges. They need to include measures to ensure food security, the development of cooperatives of agricultural producers, and joint food supply chains. They need to consider creating food hubs in the border regions in case of need for mutual supplies; create and develop joint production and supply of medicines and medical devices. The geography of border regions is such that some of them are much closer to each other than to neighboring regions of their own countries.

It is necessary to develop and more actively use telemedicine and online education to maintain the high dynamics of humanitarian interrelations in the Russian-Kazakh border area. It is possible and necessary to develop a joint integrated educational online platform that will ensure lifelong learning. Quarantine measures should not paralyze life in border regions, and even in a lockdown, it is necessary to preserve the principles of mutual assistance and joint solution to emerging problems. As the speed of the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic in the modern world has shown, it is almost impossible to close the state border "with a lock".

The COVID-19 pandemic has severely limited the physical interaction of border regions. In this regard, the importance of Internet communities as an effective tool for the development of self-government institutions and increasing civic engagement is increasing.

Now, the land border of Kazakhstan and Russia is still closed. Trains and bus routes have not yet restored their work, and only a few categories of citizens can cross the border by car. At the same time, the rate and scale of the spread of the pandemic are not decreasing, and the statistics of disease cases increase. The impact of the closure of the Kazakh-Russian border on reducing the incidence of COVID-19 needs to be further investigated, but the fact that this has reduced business activity has become

an obstacle to communication between relatives and friends, has broken educational and cultural interactions in the border regions can be declared unambiguously even now.

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COVID-19 пандемиясы жағдайында Қазақстан-Ресей шекарасы

Аңдатпа. COVID-19 пандемиясы және қазіргі санитарлық-эпидемиологиялық жағдай Қазақстан-Ресей шекарасының функцияларына және Ресей мен Қазақстан арасындағы шекаралық ынтымақтастықтың дамуына әсер етті.

Мақала Қазақстан-Ресей шекарасының түйісу және тосқауыл сияқты қызметі арақатынасын қарастыруға арналған. Еуразиялық интеграцияның дамуымен және Еуразиялық экономикалық одақтың жұмыс істей бастауымен Ресей мен Қазақстан арасындағы шекаралық ынтымақтастықтың рөлі артып, мемлекеттік шекараның байланыс функциясы артты, өйткені шекаралас аймақтар тауарлардың, қызметтердің, капиталдың және жұмыс күшінің қозғалысы жолындағы кіру нүктелері болып табылады. Ресей-Қазақстан шекарасының «байланыстырушы» түрінен «интеграция» түріне көшу факторлары қалыптасты. Алайда, COVID-19 пандемиясы бұл үдерісті бәсеңдетіп қана қоймай, сонымен қатар Ресей-Қазақстан шекарасының тосқауылдық қызметін күшейтіп, шекаралас аймақтардағы іскерлік белсенділік пен гуманитарлық байланыстарды төмендетті.

Автор мынадай қорытындыға келеді: Қазақстан мен Ресей індеттің таралуына ден қою және оның салдарын барынша азайту бойынша ортақ саясатты әзірлеуі, шекаралас аймақтардың азық-түлік және

биологиялық қауіпсіздігін қамтамасыз ету, экспорттаушылар үшін «жасыл дәліздерді» ұйымдастыру алгоритмін құру қажет. Мигранттарға арналған «транзиттік дәліздерді» қазіргі заманғы байланыс құралдары арқылы ішінара немесе толық жабу жағдайында да Қазақстан-Ресей шекарасының байланыс функциясын сақтау шараларын әзірлейді.

Түйін сөздер: Қазақстан-Ресей шекарасы, шекаралық байланыс, шекаралық тосқауыл, еуразиялық интеграция, трансшекаралық ынтымақтастық, байланыстырушы шекара, интеграциялық шекара, трансшекаралық өзара іс-қимыл.

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Казахстанско-российская граница в условиях пандемии COVID-19

Аннотация. Пандемия COVID-19 и текущая санитарно-эпидемиологическая ситуация повлияли на функции казахстанско-российской границы и развитие приграничного сотрудничества России и Казахстана.

Статья посвящена рассмотрению соотношения таких функций казахстанско-российской границы, как контактность и барьерность. С развитием евразийской интеграции и началом функционирования Евразийского экономического союза роль приграничного сотрудничества России и Казахстана повысилась, а функция контактности государственной границы усилилась, поскольку именно приграничные регионы являются точками входа на пути движения товаров, услуг, капитала и рабочей силы. Сложившиеся факторы перехода российско-казахстанской границы из типа «соединяющей» в тип «интеграционной». Однако пандемия COVID-19 не только замедлила этот процесс, но и усилила барьерную функцию российско-казахстанской границы, снизила деловую активность и гуманитарные связи в приграничных регионах.

Автор приходит к следующим выводам: Казахстану и России необходимо выработать общую политику реагирования на распространение пандемии и минимизации ее последствий, обеспечить продовольственную и биологическую безопасность приграничных регионов, создать алгоритм организации «зеленых коридоров» для экспортеров и «транзитных коридоров» для мигрантов, разработать меры по сохранению контактной функции казахстанско-российской границы даже в условиях ее частичного или полного закрытия через современные средства коммуникации.

Ключевые слова: казахстанско-российская граница, контактность границы, барьерность границы, евразийская интеграция, приграничное сотрудничество, соединяющая граница, интеграционная граница, трансграничное взаимодействие.

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