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Kazakhstan and its new president

Following the presidential elections held on June 9, Kassym-Jomart Tokayev has become the new president of Kazakhstan, benefiting of 70,7 percent of the votes. Considering that Kazakhstan's stability represents an influent backbone in Central Asian security architecture, many international observers are strongly interested about the political and economic path which Nazarbayev's successor will decide to undertake.

Stability and security concerns emerged during the electoral campaign, when peaceful protests were declared illegal by national authorities that arrested dozens of people. New anti-government protests followed the results of the vote, contesting that elections were not free and fair: according to Kazakh police 4.000 people were detained during rallies in different cities of the country (*4 тысячи человек задержали во время митингов в Казахстане* *Подробнее*, Tengrinews, June 18, 2019, https://tengrinews.kz/kazakhstan_news/4-tyisyachi-zaderjali-vremya-mitingov-kazahstane-371609/).

Nazarbayev's heavy legacy – as father of the independent nation – will realistically push Tokayev to maintain political continuity. In the domestic field, he will deal with several challenges in order to ensure a condition of social and political stability, mainly adopting measures and initiatives to overcome the negative effects of a low economic growth. In his first public address to the nation, the new president declared his intention to address economic and social concerns of Kazakh citizens, by means of providing houses and creating new jobs, raising household incomes and wages (G. Voloshin, *Kazakhstan's New President Faces Street Protests, Tough Choices Ahead*, Eurasia Daily Monitor Vol. 16 Issue: 87, June 12, 2019, <https://jamestown.org/program/kazakhstans-new-president-faces-street-protests-tough-choices-ahead/>).

Furthermore, the adherence to pursue a balanced, multi-vector foreign policy is also a key priority in the agenda of the President Tokayev. In April (when he took interim office before the elections), Tokayev visited Moscow confirming Russia-Kazakhstan strategic partnership: as a matter of fact, Kazakhstan is

founding member of the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) and member of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) since the beginning.

China will remain an important partner, due to Kazakhstan's hub-role within the Belt and Road Initiative: President Xi Jinping has promptly invited the new Kazakh President to visit officially China, in order to consolidate bilateral relations. Some weeks ago he attended – for the first time – the annual summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), stressing the need to enhance multilateralism and cooperation, involving actors such as the European Union, the Eurasian Economic Union, ASEAN. About the relations with the EU, after a meeting with European Council President, Donald Tusk, Tokayev stated that the cooperation with the EU is absolutely obvious, mainly because the EU is Kazakhstan's largest trading partner (*President of Kazakhstan took EU advice on political transformation – Euronews exclusive*, Euronews, June 17, 2019, <https://www.euronews.com/2019/06/15/president-of-kazakhstan-takes-eu-advice-on-political-transformation-euronews-exclusive>). The main task for the new Kazakh president will be to preserve the balance among the interests of the external powers, a political strategy that has allowed Kazakhstan under Nazarbayev to strengthen its political and economic independence, increasing its international role.

Fabio Indeo – *PhD holder in Geopolitics at University of Trieste and non-resident fellow research at Center for Energy Governance and Security (EGS South Korea).*