

This is how foreign media have covered the resignation of the president of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev.

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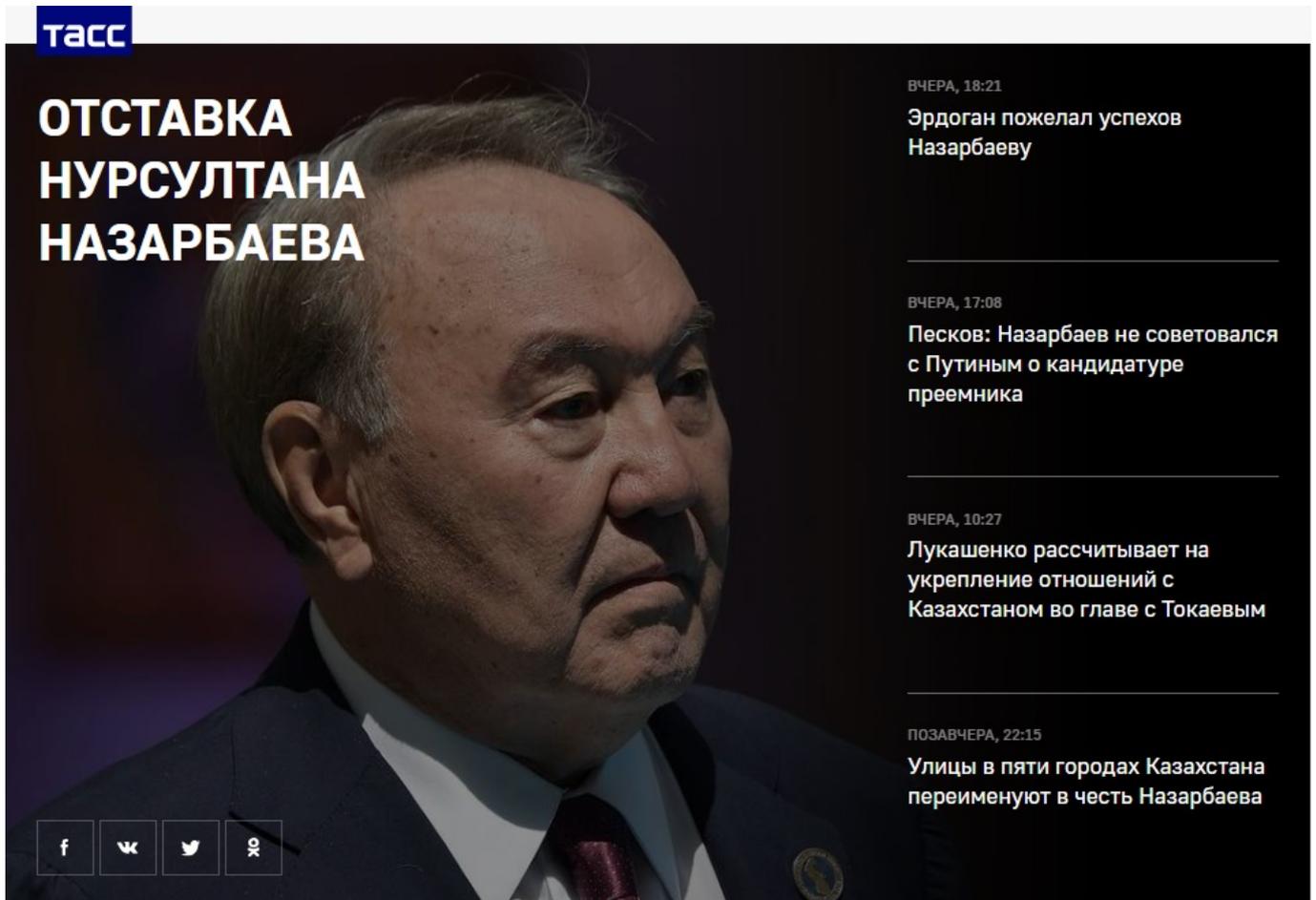
#### [На русском](#)

The resignation of Nursultan Nazarbayev from the office of President of Kazakhstan has become a significant event in the former Soviet countries the international press could not but cover. In addition to news items about the situation in the country, Russian media have published long reads with some historical background, analysis and expectations.

Kazakhstan is the significant foreign political partner of Russia and the key member of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), the idea of which is ascribed to Nazarbayev in the mid of the 90s. Putin was the first one whom Nazarbayev contacted by phone to tell about his decision.

All analysts absolutely share the opinion that “in practice, Tokayev’s power would be restricted by the need to always consult his predecessor.” According to the [Meduza](#), the constitutional reform pursued in recent years has been clearly intended to ensure early resignation of Nazarbayev from the office of president without any loss of influence.

[Novaya Gazeta](#) notes that Yelbassy (leader of the nation) has skilfully removed all major figures from the political scene of Kazakhstan in 30 years and left not a single politician who could be fully deemed a successor.



The Russian media has placed emphasis on the role of the United States and China in the change of the head of state in Kazakhstan. In the interview to [TASS](#), Andrei Korobkov, professor of political science of Tennessee State University, said that Washington is well aware of the resource potential of the country and the significance of Kazakhstan for Russia as one of the key members of the Eurasian Union. “Therefore, they [United States] will certainly be trying to influence the process somehow, to promote their people, but it wouldn't be that easy because the presence of the United States in Kazakhstan is relatively limited. The Americans are concerned not only with the presence of Russia, its impact on the country, but also with the potential expansion of China's role.”

“Kazakhstan has many political forces, and a game will be played among those who are more or less prone to Russia or the United States. However, I believe that if Nazarbayev has the influence, he will maintain the multi-vector approach of Kazakhstan and good relations with Russia, United States, EU, China and other regional powers,” Sean Roberts, programme director of researches in international development of Georgetown University, said to [RIA Novosti](#).

The respondent of the news agency also noted that in the event of successful transition of

power in Kazakhstan, the next state where the same scenario is possible would be Tajikistan, led by Emomali Rahmon since early 1990s.

## Pressure on the Kremlin

Western media have shown less excitement about the resignation of Nazarbayev. If major global media outlets have devoted analytical material and reviews to this event, local media have published news items, at best.

The voluntary resignation of ex-president Nazarbayev should be seen through the prism of post-Soviet space and Russia, in particular.

[The Guardian](#) wrote that this manoeuvre may answer a key question for ageing post-Soviet autocrats: how to safely relinquish power in the winner-takes-all political systems that they have created. The respondent from the media, Mark Galeotti, a security analyst and the author of *We Need to Talk About Putin*, said that Nazarbayev's exit strategy could provide a preview of a similar plan in the Kremlin.

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**Kazakhstan**

## Kazakhstan president Nazarbayev steps down after 30 years in power

Nursultan Nazarbayev has led oil-rich country since fall of the Soviet Union

**Andrew Roth in Moscow and agencies**

Tue 19 Mar 2019 13:54 GMT



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▲ President Nazarbayev (centre) in 2012 at a meeting of his Nur Otan party in the Kazakh capital, Astana. Photograph: Stanislav Filippov/AFP/Getty Images

Marlene Laruelle, the director of the Central Asia Programme at George Washington University, in the interview to the [New York Times](#) expressed the same opinion. According to her, the resignation of Nazarbayev is symbolically putting pressure on the Kremlin. Even if Putin, at 66, is much younger than Nazarbayev and was just elected last year to another six-year term.

Russian journalist Konstantin Eggert in his column for the Russian service of [DW](#) wrote, "First comments appeared just a few minutes after the resignation, "Nazarbayev is testing a model of resignation from presidency for Putin." The joke is good, yet it has nothing to do with the reality. The two leaders have absolutely different political culture and history, ambitions, identity and expectations. I think Putin won't be able to repeat Nazarbayev's experience - even if the experience is successful, and even if he wants it."

According to [Washington Post](#), Nazarbayev is not the first post-Soviet autocrat to attempt to choreograph leadership change by reminding about the experience of Russia and Azerbaijan. However, the media noted that even in cases where departing leaders do pass power to a chosen successor, there are few guarantees.

They cite an example of ex-president of Kyrgyzstan, Almazbek Atambaev, who "did everything in his power to ensure that his prime minister, Sooronbai Zheenbekov, was elected Kyrgyzstan's next president." Once Zheenbekov took power, however, he wasted little time launching criminal investigations against members of Atambaev's inner circle. "With Nazarbayev's resignation, [president of Uzbekistan Shavkat] Mirziyoyev seems likely to emerge as Central Asia's leading statesman. Kazakhstan, now under the leadership of an interim president, will need to accept, at least in the short run, diminished influence regionally and globally," [Washington Post](#) wrote.

Foreign experts share the opinion that the new president of Kazakhstan, Kassym-Zhomart Tokayev is just a temporary figure. "The real question is, who will be Kazakhstan's third president," analyst Camilla Hagelund said in the interview to [Reuters](#).

## **"Old and a good friend"**

One more aspect discussed in foreign press is the influence of China, which is actively promoting the New Silk Road project. [Bloomberg](#) noted the words of Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman that Beijing remains confident in bilateral cooperation and is familiar with Tokayev, who has been an "old friend and a good friend."

Chinese media cover the resignation of Nazarbayev in the same way. According to [Shanghai Daily](#), China has confidence in ties with Kazakhstan.

## China-Kazakhstan friendship to continue in post-Nazarbayev era

Updated 21:20, 21-Mar-2019

By Li Zhao

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According to [CGTN](#), since taking over the country's top office, Nazarbayev has made over 20 official visits to Beijing. "To him, China is Kazakhstan's "closest and most reliable friend and partner."

A good sign for Beijing is that Kassym-Zhomart Tokayev speaks fluent Chinese.

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*This article was prepared as part of the Giving Voice, Driving Change - from the Borderland to the Steppes Project implemented with the financial support of the Foreign Ministry of Norway. The opinions expressed in the article do not reflect the position of the editorial or donor.*



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