

ASIAC Days in Central Asia 2026

7-8 September, Almaty

Almaty Hub, str. Zenkova 24, 4th floor

DAY 1

09:30–10:00

Introductory Remarks

- **Aida AIDARKULOVA**, Executive Director, CAPS Unlock
- **Lorenzo PUBBLICI**, President of ASIAC, the Italian Association for the Study of Central Asia and the Caucasus (online)
- **Pavel Koktyshev**, CEO & Co-Founder, MOST Holding

10:00–11:30

Keynote Panel

“Italy–Central Asia Relations: Opportunities and How Not to Miss Them”

Chair: Rebecca CIATTINI, Ca' Foscari University of Venice

Keynote: *“Milan–Almaty One-Way Ticket: Exception, Resilience, and Technologies”*

Alessandro Frigerio, Independent Researcher

Panel discussion:

- **Edoardo Crisafulli**, Director, Italian Cultural Center
- **Niccolo Heilpern**, Vice president of Central Asia, Caspian and Anatolia region, MAIRE group
- **Marco Beretta**, President of Association for Italian-Kazakh Trade
- **Pavel Koktyshev**, CEO & Co-Founder, MOST Holding
- **Aida Aidarkulova**, Executive Director, CAPS Unlock

11:30–13:00

Session 1

Panel 1A. Belonging (Room 1)

Chair: Rebecca CIATTINI, Ca' Foscari University of Venice

The Influence of Kazakhization Policy on Minority Ethnic Groups: The Case of the Dungan People

Zhamilya ABIK, Nazarbayev University

Kazakh Migrations from China to Kazakhstan in XX and XXI Centuries: Same People and Same Motherland?

Didar KASSYMOVA, C.C. Valikhanov Institute of History and Ethnology

Koryo-saram in Central Asia: Identity and Belonging in the Pages of the Lunar Calendar

Community Organization and Identity Politics of Koryo-saram Churches in Hambak Village

Nathalie M. KWON, Independent Researcher, and Eun-Hye KWAK, Inha University

Panel 1B. Italy and Central Asia (Room 2)

Chair: Tlegen Kuandykov, CAPS Unlock

Italy's Hydro-Diplomacy in Central Asia: Shaping Water Governance and Political Transformation in Kyrgyzstan

Görkem ATSUNGUR, American University of Central Asia

Kazakhstan–Italy Relations in the Era of Middle-Power Diplomacy: Constraints and Opportunities for Economic and Security Cooperation

Douglas ANDERSON (in person), Dow Jones and European Guanxi, and **Sardor ALLAYAROV**, University of Washington (online)

Constructing Strategic Proximity: Italian Diplomatic Discourse toward Kazakhstan, 2024–2026

Alberto FRIGERIO, Innotech

Insights from Italy on Supporting Agrifarms: Knowledge Systems, Legal Foundations, and Development Strategies for Peri-Urban and Distant Rural Areas

Aliya TANKIBAYEVA, Al-Farabi Kazakh National University

Dr.Silvia Grandi and Dr.Sandy MacDonald (online)

Panel 1C. Gender (Room 3)

Chair: Frank MARACCHIONE, SOAS University of London

From Digital Opportunity to Migration Dependency: Youth, Women, and Uneven Transformation in Central Asia

Zebo ISAKOVA MURODOVNA, Independent Researcher (online)

Social Adaptation and Onward Migration of Internal Migrant Women: Bishkek City as a Transit Space

Jyldyz DJAKYPBAY KYZY, Eötvös Loránd University (online)

Re-Interpreting Women's Emancipation in Post-Soviet Central Asia

Niginakhon URALOVA, Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz

From Privilege to Partnership: Male Leaders as Allies for Gender Equality in Kazakhstani Higher Education

Aisulu GABDULLINA, Nazarbayev University

13:00–14:00 BREAK

14:00–15:30 Session 2

Panel 2A. Knowledge (Room 1)

Giulia SCIORATI, King's College London

Competing Experts, Competing Visions: Epistemic Networks and Urban Knowledge

Andrei SEMENOV and **Zarema NURBAYEVA**, Nazarbayev University

Knowledge Production and Academic Mobility between Central Asia and Central Europe

Assel ALIBAYEVA, al-Farabi Kazakh National University

Pluriversal Scholarship and Epistemic Misrecognition in Central Asian Knowledge Production

Almira TABAEVA, Almaty Management University

Protecting Local Voices: Privacy, Consent, and Personal Data Protection in Knowledge Production Concerning Central Asia

Randeep MANN, Central University of Punjab (online)

Panel 2B. Media (Room 2)

Chair: Filip Noubel, CAPS Unlock/Global Voices

Media Manipulation: Russian Propaganda Narratives in Kazakhstan

Shugyla KILYBAYEVA, al-Farabi Kazakh National University

The Digital Silk Road in Central Asia: China's Tech Expansion and the Sovereignty Dilemma

Khyati SINGH, Jawaharlal Nehru University

After the Donors: Hybrid Security Narratives and the Future of PVE in Central Asia

Anastasiya RESHETNYAK, L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University

15:30–17:00 Session 3

Panel 3A. Energy Transitions in a Multipolar World: Discourse, Diversification, and Dependency in Kazakhstan (Room 1)

Chair: Mukhtar AMANBAIULY, Maqsut Narikbayev University

Energy Diversification and Liminal Agency in Kazakhstan's Multivector Foreign Policy

Jessica NEAFIE, Nazarbayev University

The Energy Security Nexus in a Multipolar World: The Effect of Foreign Investor Energy Influence and Competition in Central Asia

Mukhtar AMANBAIULY, Maqsut Narikbayev University

Multivectorism Under Crisis: How the Russia-Ukraine War has affected Energy and Diversification Policy in Kazakhstan

Adiya AKHMER, Nazarbayev University

Unpacking Energy Myths: Discursive Reproduction and Policy Foreclosure in Kazakhstan's Energy Transition

Kanat KENZHETAYEV, Nazarbayev University

Panel 3B. Heritage (Room 2)

Chair: Giulia SCIORATI, King's College London

Who Has the Right to Interpret the Past? Public Archaeology, Colonial Legacies, and Knowledge Production in Kazakhstan

Regina BRAUN, University of Milan and Ca' Foscari University of Venice (online)

Local Narratives and Shared Knowledge: Collaborative Book Projects as Spaces for Plural Dialogue

Francesc FUSTÉ-FORNÉ, University of Girona

Exploring Tourist and Stakeholder Perceptions of Heritage Dependence, Environmental Degradation, and Tourism Diversification in Uzbekistan

Sanjar MARDONOV, University College Sedaya International (online)

Oil Museums as Interpretive Infrastructure: Petroculture and Political Legitimacy in Kazakhstan

Anyia KUTELEVA, University of Wolverhampton

Panel 3C. Of Flowing and Flooded Histories: Literary Waterscapes in Soviet and Post-Soviet Tajikistan (Room 3)

Chair: Rauan BOLAT, Al-Farabi Kazakh National University

Writing the Rebel River: Poetics of Water in Early Soviet Tajikistan

Rebecca CIATTINI, Ca' Foscari University of Venice

Andrej Volos's Atlantis: on Submerged Soviet Ecosystems

Caterina RE, University of Genoa (online)

17:00–18:30 Session 4

Roundtable 4A. Media in the Crosshairs in New Kazakhstan (Room 1)

Chair: Joanna LILLIS, Journalist and author

- **Makpal Mukankyzy**, Tamshy

- **Yesengul Kapkyzy**, Minber Akparat Agenttigi
- **Dmitry Mazorenko**, Vlast.kz
- **Shugyla Kilibayeva**, Al-Farabi Kazakh National University,
- **Peter Leonard**, Havli Substack/CAPS Unlock

Panel 4B. Water (Room 2)

Chair: Alessandro FRIGERIO, Independent Researcher

Water Governance and Conflict Dynamics in the Fergana Valley Enclaves

Jasmine QABDYMYRZA, University of Glasgow

Hydro-Hegemony across the Ili River: Expanding Understandings of Hydropower

Andrew GUNDAL, University of World Economy and Diplomacy

Can Water Diplomacy Foster Regionalism in Central Asia? Expert Perceptions and Media Narratives -

Zarina MUKASHEVA, L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University

Olivier ARIFON, Université Côte d'Azur

18:45–20:00

Documentary Screening: Gone South Village: A Thai Family's Pilgrimage to China by Bill Callahan, Director

Roundtable with director and discussant **Dr Giulia SCIORATI**, King's College London

Free evening. Participants are encouraged to gather at the recommended venues for informal networking.

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Almaty Hub, str. Zenkova 24, 4th floor

DAY 2

10:00–11:30

Session 6

Panel 6A. Governance (Room 1)

Chair: Tlegen Kuandykov, CAPS Unlock

Kinship, Obligation, and Resource Allocation: Rethinking Informal Institutions in Kazakhstan's Political Economy

Patricija Romina SMOLNIKAR, University of Oxford

The Innovation Governance Paradox: Institutional Transformation and the "2026 Reset" in Kyrgyzstan

Bakhtiar IGAMBERDIEV, Ala-Too International University

Shamanism, Traditional Beliefs, and Trust in Government in Kazakhstan

Nygmetszhan KUZENBAYEV, Maqsut Narikbayev University

Statutory Food Security and Social Transformation: Comparative Insights from India's NFSA 2013 for Central Asian Welfare Dynamics

Abhishek Kumar VERMA, Central University of Punjab

Migrants, Technocrats and the State: A Situated Political Economy of Remittance Dependency in Central Asia

Matthew HENEGAN, University of Glasgow and OSCE Academy Bishkek

Panel 6B. Energy, resources and capital (Room 2)

Chair: Jessica Neafie, Nazarbayev University

Resource Fantasies and "Central Asia" in the European Union's Critical Raw Materials Discourses and Policies

Kristiina SILVAN, Finnish Institute of International Affairs

Diversification Without Autonomy: Kazakhstan's Position in Critical Raw Material Supply Chains under the EU's Critical Raw Materials Act

Oliver RESCHREITER, Jagiellonian University

Mispriced Physical Risk in the Caspian Basin: Multilateral Capital, Infrastructure Degradation, and the Limits of Sectoral Governance

Bakhtiyar NASTAGIMOV, Nastagimov Advisory

Prospects for Enhancing Renewable Energy Capacity in Uzbekistan
Surayyo KUSHBAKOVA, University of World Economy and Diplomacy

Sunshine on Coal Country: Barriers and Potentials for Solar PV Integration in Kazakhstan's Energy System
Chiara Quynh Tien LUONG-THANH, Rhine-Waal University

11:30–13:00 Session 7

Panel 7A. China and Central Asia (Room 1)

Chair: Giulia Sciorati, King's College London

E-Commerce as Infrastructural Power: Chinese Platforms, Logistics, and Payments in Central Asia
Aleksei CHIGADAEV, Freie Universität Berlin

"Green" Capitalism and Socio-Ecological Futures: Everyday Agency in Chinese-Funded "Green" Projects in Uzbekistan
Frank MARACCHIONE, SOAS University of London

Audiences, Contexts, and Cues: Explaining Divergent Public Perceptions of China in Central Asia
Jessica NEAFIE, Nazarbayev University

Panel 7B. AI and Mass Communication in Central Asia (Room 2)

Chair: Peter Leonard, CAPS Unlock

Media Narratives on Public Policy of AI-development in Kazakhstan and Russia

Aigerim ALZHANOVA, al-Farabi Kazakh National University; **Ilya BYKOV**, Independent Researcher (online)

Artificial Intelligence in the Mass Communication System in Central Asia: Transformational Processes and Impacts
Karlyga MYSSAYEVA, al-Farabi Kazakh National University

Artificial Intelligence and Linguistic Transformation in Kazakhstani Digital Journalism
Galiya IBRAYEVA, al-Farabi Kazakh National University

13:00–14:00 BREAK

14:00–15:30

Session 8

Panel 8A. Region (Room 1)

Chair: Paolo Sorbello, Vlast.kz

Do Central Asians Think Regionally? Public Attitudes toward Cooperation and Belonging

Zhanibek ARYNOV, Nazarbayev University

Latinized Kazakh as Semiotic Capital: Local Voices and Script Change in Almaty

Alina KAMALOVA, Maqsut Narikbayev University

Post-Soviet but Not Russian: Central Asian Migration and Russian-Speaking Infrastructures in Finland

Larisa KANGASPURO, University of Helsinki

Panel 8B. Ecology (Room 2)

Chair: Dr Frank MARACCHIONE, SOAS University of London

Climate Governance and Carbon Trading in India and Kazakhstan: Sustainable Development and Emerging Regional Cooperation in Central Asia

Sweta KUMARI, Central University of Punjab (online)

Exploring Tourist and Stakeholder Perceptions of Heritage Dependence, Environmental Degradation, and Tourism Diversification in Uzbekistan

Sanjar MARDONOV, University College Sedaya International

Human-Wildlife Interactions in the Gissar Mountains in Uzbekistan

Fatima MANNAPBEKOVA, University of St Andrews

Roundtable 8C. The Glitch in Knowledge Production: How Five YSB Members Became Parallel (online) (Room 3)

Chair: Anastasiya SHIKINA, Fergana State University and Youth Sounding Board Uzbekistan

- **Abbos MANSUROV**, Barqaror Hayot NGO and Youth Sounding Board Uzbekistan
- **Amirbek SALIMOV**, University of Bonn, Nightingale Intelligence and Youth Sounding Board Uzbekistan.

15:30–17:00

Session 9

Panel 9A. Connectivity (Room 1)

Patricija Romina SMOLNIKAR, University of Oxford

Developmental Capacity of the Middle Corridor: Cases of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan

Elvir MAMMADOV, Dalian University of Foreign Languages (online)

External Powers' Competition and Kazakhstan's Agency in "Hard" and "Soft" Connectivity since 2022

Konstantinas ANDRIJAUSKAS, Vilnius University

Kazakhstan's Tech Modernization: Navigating the US and Indian Defence Technology in a Multipolar Era

Amar Singh CHAUDHARY, Jawaharlal Nehru University

Dynamic Multivector Strategy: Mechanisms of Adaptive Statecraft in Kazakhstan's Foreign Policy

Assylzat KARABAYEVA, KIMEP University

India–Central Asia in the 21st Century

Akbota TURXTANOVA, al-Farabi Kazakh National University

Panel 9A. Memory (Room 2)

Chair: Rebecca CIATTINI, Ca' Foscari University of Venice

Under the Dervish Cloak: Neo-Victorian Narratives about the Great Game

Irina KANTARBAEVA-BILL, University of Toulouse Jean Jaurès

From Lahore to Samarkand: Punjabi Memory and the Spiritual Cartography of Central Asia

Sehajdeep KAUR, Mata Gujri College, Punjabi University (online)

The Steppe as a Global Nexus: 13th-Century Central Asia as a Laboratory of Connectivity in Latin and Armenian Sources

Riccardo CASSI, Eötvös Loránd University

17:00–18:30

Book Presentation "Silk Mirage: Through the Looking Glass in Uzbekistan"

by Joanna Lillis, Bloomsbury

Roundtable with author and discussant **Dr Frank MARACCHIONE**, SOAS University of London.
