

A. Kenzhetayeva\* Bluefield State University,  
Bluefield, WV 24701, USA\*E-mail: [akenzhetayeva@bluefieldstate.edu](mailto:akenzhetayeva@bluefieldstate.edu)

## SME DEVELOPMENT IN POST-SOVIET CENTRAL ASIA: THE CASE OF KAZAKHSTAN AND UZBEKISTAN

### Abstract

This article examines the development of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in post-Soviet Central Asia, focusing on Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. Contrary to the dominant interpretation promoted by international organizations, which emphasizes taxes, corruption, and bureaucratic inefficiencies as the main barriers to SMEs, this study uncovers a different set of underlying challenges. The aim of the study is to identify and analyze the key operational, institutional, and contextual factors shaping the development of small and medium-sized enterprises in post-Soviet Central Asia, with a focus on Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, taking into account the specific characteristics of the local business environment and the everyday operating conditions of enterprises. Drawing on in-depth interviews and media content analysis, the research identifies key operational barriers that remain largely overlooked. These findings reveal that, beyond institutional and regulatory constraints, everyday operational realities significantly shape SME development in the region. The analysis is based on the Institutional Theory and Contextual Dependence Theory, which together explain how formal institutions, historical legacies, and local contextual factors shape SME operations in different environments. By presenting qualitative evidence from Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, the study provides a deeper understanding of the structural and contextual factors influencing SMEs in post-Soviet economies. The obtained conclusions expand the scientific understanding of entrepreneurship in countries with a transition economy and can be used in the development of a state policy to support SMEs, taking into account regional specifics, real operational needs of business and the peculiarities of the institutional environment.

**Keywords:** small and medium-sized enterprises, institutional theory, contextual dependence, Central Asia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, operational barriers

### Introduction

Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) play a crucial role in national economies across the globe, with particular significance in developing countries [1, 2- 4]. Despite the role of SMEs being considered essential for developing countries, including the Central Asian region, their contribution to GDP is relatively low, varying between 1.3% and 54% compared to the OECD average of 55% [5]. Moreover, the percentage of manufacturing SMEs among the other types of activities is very low.

In Kazakhstan, the share of manufacturing SMEs equals only 5% of the total percentage of SMEs [6]. In Uzbekistan, such a number is relatively higher, around 23% [7]. Due to high financial barriers, entry into the manufacturing sector of the economy is more difficult, as it requires a strong material and technical base and large financial reserves and assets.

The body of research concerning SMEs in post-Soviet countries, especially within the context of Central Asia, remains notably scarce. Evidently, there is a scarcity of scholarly research on the Central Asian region in the international academic community. Factors such as the relative novelty of Central Asian governments, limited access to comprehensive statistical data, and an underdeveloped academic landscape could all contribute to the underrepresentation of this region in academic discourse.

Therefore, the main objective of this study is to bridge this gap by examining and analyzing the current state of SMEs in the region. By conducting an in-depth analysis, this research aims to explore the challenges, opportunities, and potential for growth that SMEs face in Central Asia. Particularly, the study performs a comparative analysis of two Central Asian countries: Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, contributing to the knowledge of what it is like to be an SME in the region, thirty years after the collapse of the centrally planned economy.

The scientific novelty of this study lies in three main contributions. First, unlike previous studies and international assessments that primarily emphasize corruption, taxation, and administrative barriers, this research identifies operational constraints, including dependence on imported raw materials and equipment, logistics limitations, and shortages of skilled labor, as central factors influencing manufacturing SMEs in Central Asia. Second, the study provides one of the first qualitative comparative analyses of manufacturing SMEs in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan based on evidence from 46 in-depth interviews and media content analysis. Third, the research extends Institutional Theory and Contextual Dependence Theory by demonstrating how formal institutions and local contextual conditions interact to shape the everyday experiences of manufacturing entrepreneurs in post-Soviet economies.

Recent studies have increasingly emphasized the importance of institutional quality, access to finance, innovation, and government support for SME development in Central Asia and other transition economies. Financial constraints continue to limit SME growth in Central Asia, highlighting the importance of regulatory and institutional factors in shaping the performance of small firms [8, 9]. More recent research has also focused on innovation and sustainability challenges faced by SMEs in Kazakhstan, emphasizing the growing role of eco-innovations, technological upgrading, and government support mechanisms [10]. Several studies have emphasized the importance of economic diversification, industrial modernization, and innovation for SME development in Kazakhstan [11-12].

The findings are broadly consistent with previous studies that identify financial constraints, labor shortages, and bureaucratic barriers as major obstacles for SMEs in Central Asia. However, most previous studies have concentrated on macroeconomic indicators, regulatory reforms, or SMEs in general, while limited attention has been paid to manufacturing SMEs and entrepreneurs' perceptions of business challenges in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. Moreover, few studies have combined qualitative interviews with entrepreneurs and newspaper content analysis to compare institutional environments in the two countries. This study seeks to address these gaps by examining the experiences of manufacturing SMEs and the role of institutional support in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, thirty years after the transition to a market economy.

This research also builds upon Institutional Theory and Contextual Dependence by moving beyond traditional applications that focus primarily on historical trajectories and regulatory frameworks. While existing literature acknowledges that institutions shape SME development through formal policies, property rights, and government support mechanisms [13-14], this work extends this perspective by examining how these institutional arrangements function in practice today, particularly in the manufacturing sectors of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. The work analyzes how institutional capacity, governance efficiency, and bureaucratic structures impact SMEs' ability to secure financing, access raw materials, and integrate into regional and international markets.

Institutional Theory emphasizes that the success and characteristics of SMEs are shaped by institutional frameworks, historical contexts, and the broader business environment. This perspective emphasizes how formal and informal rules, policies, and cultural norms shape the opportunities and constraints for SMEs [13. – 37, 14. – 125, 15 -18]. This work aligns with Institutional Theory by deeply analyzing how the institutional frameworks of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, shaped by their post-Soviet legacy, influence the operation, sustainability, and growth of SMEs. However, the analysis extends beyond traditional applications of Institutional Theory by focusing on the current period in post-Soviet Central Asia. By concentrating particularly on the manufacturing sector, the work explores how institutional arrangements specifically influence industrial SMEs. This work reveals the nuanced ways institutional arrangements shape opportunities for growth, innovation, and competitiveness within the manufacturing sector.

Contextual Dependence Theory expands this view by recognizing the importance of geographical, cultural, and temporal factors that create unique conditions for SME development in different regions. This perspective underscores that SMEs do not operate in a vacuum; their development is deeply influenced by the unique characteristics of their local environment, which

includes natural resources, regional infrastructure, historical legacies, and societal norms [15. – 56, 19 - 23]. This work also aligns with Contextual Dependence Theory, which underscores the importance of geographical, cultural, and temporal factors in shaping SME development [18. – 116, 20. – 67]. The research embraces this perspective by examining how the unique historical, economic, and geographic contexts of Central Asia shape SME operations. However, the work shifts the focus to understanding how these contextual factors interact with institutional frameworks to shape the realities of SME operations. Rather than viewing contextual influences in isolation, my research emphasizes the dynamic relationship between institutional and contextual variables, particularly in the manufacturing sector, which faces distinct challenges not fully captured by the Contextual Dependence theory.

International reports also provide useful contemporary information on SMEs in various countries, including Central Asia. These reports discuss various problems that SMEs face in the Central Asian countries, including labor shortage, business networks, clientelism, lack of financial support, corruption, and excessive red tape [24-25].

Even though the information from the surveys greatly contributes to the area of knowledge on businesses in the region, their results differ from the interviewees' narratives and news reports. Because surveys are mostly based on statistics and quantitative analysis, they usually provide certain categories for respondents to choose from. This research addresses these gaps by analyzing SMEs within the contemporary economic and political context of Central Asia. This study offers actual practical comprehensions of SME operations, including the processes of establishing enterprises, securing financial resources, acquiring equipment, hiring personnel, and navigating government support systems. This nuanced approach allows for a more precise understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing SMEs in the region.

#### **Materials and methods of research**

The main research question of my dissertation is: How do the operational dynamics, regulatory frameworks, market conditions, and socio-economic factors influence the experience of managing and sustaining SMEs in Kazakhstan compared to those faced by SMEs in Uzbekistan? My research question focuses on understanding the experiences and challenges faced by SMEs in Central Asia. The research explores various aspects of SME operations, including their establishment, day-to-day management, resource acquisition, market entry, and expansion efforts. The design of this research has been shaped significantly by the application of two theoretical perspectives, Institutional Theory and Contextual Dependence Theory, each of which informed different components of the study's structure, case selection, data collection, and interpretation of results. These theories helped guide both the formulation of research questions and the selection of qualitative methods that could best reveal the institutional and environmental factors influencing SME development in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan.

A comparative cross-case analysis allows us to learn about differences and similarities in SMEs of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. The work explores certain political and economic business environments, the availability of raw materials for manufacturing, the presence of a skilled labor force, and the level of import and export. The work focuses on big cities that have a high number of SMEs, with more rural areas with a relatively developed manufacturing sector. In Kazakhstan, it explores manufacturing SMEs in Almaty city and the Almaty region, as well as in Karaganda city and the Karaganda region. In Uzbekistan, the work analyzes SMEs in Tashkent city and the Tashkent region, as well as in Samarkand city and the Samarkand region.

Data collection and analysis. To understand the meaning of the SME sector for the economy in Central Asia, the paper utilizes a case study approach. Based on the similarity principle, the analysis and comparison of SME in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan represent a good sample of the region. Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan have many similarities but differ in certain political, economic, and social aspects. The analysis employ two types of research: in-depth interviews and newspaper analysis. Interviews were conducted with SME owners, and current events and issues were studied through online newspaper articles. In this case, data from multiple sources would be integrated into the

analysis process rather than handled individually. Each source of data represents a piece of the “puzzle” that contributes to the understanding of the whole phenomenon [26].

The newspaper analysis employed a qualitative thematic content analysis approach. All 236 articles were reviewed and coded by the author according to four predetermined categories: Business Challenges, Reforms, Statistics, and Government Support and Policies. The coding process was iterative, allowing themes to be refined as new patterns emerged during the analysis. To enhance the credibility and validity of the findings, results from the newspaper analysis were triangulated with evidence obtained from in-depth interviews with SME owners and representatives. Since the study relied on a single researcher, intercoder reliability measures were not calculated, which represents a limitation of the analysis.

Following the organization of data, the pattern recognition process tracked emerging trends, such as business challenges, export opportunities, government interventions, or growing financial constraints in SME operations. Additionally, an analysis was performed to observe policy shifts, economic changes, and SME growth patterns. The coding process was iterative, meaning that initial themes were refined as new data were analyzed. Along with newspaper analysis, semi-structured interviews were conducted with owners and representatives of SMEs. The interview questions for this study were formulated based on the theoretical frameworks of Institutional Theory and Contextual Dependence Theory. Surveys and SME assessments conducted by international organizations were also used to validate and inform the structure and phrasing of the questions, especially in areas related to finance, operations, and state-business relations. In addition, the newspaper analysis played a significant role in framing the interview questions. As articles discussing business challenges, reforms, government support, and sectoral developments in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan were analyzed, recurring issues and emerging themes that were underexplored in existing literature were identified.

## Results and discussion

Participants were selected using purposive sampling to identify manufacturing SMEs operating in regions with relatively developed industrial sectors. Enterprises were located through company websites, online business directories, social media platforms, and personal contacts. This approach was supplemented by elements of convenience and snowball sampling, as some interviewees recommended other potential participants. Purposive sampling was considered appropriate because the study sought to obtain in-depth information from entrepreneurs with direct experience in establishing and managing manufacturing SMEs rather than to produce statistically representative results.

In Kazakhstan, 11 interviews were conducted in Almaty and the Almaty region and 13 interviews in Karaganda city and the Karaganda region. Interviews were conducted with representatives of the furniture industry, hardware industry, metal tile production, window manufacturing, lighting production, production of drinking water and food, soap production, manufacture of construction materials, and production of clothing.

In Uzbekistan, interviews were conducted in the agrarian sector of production, kitchen equipment, pharmacy, furniture, tile production, textile, and clothing. A total of 12 interviews were conducted in Tashkent city and Tashkent region, and 10 interviews in Samarkand city and Samarkand region. Responses were categorized into five primary coding categories: *Opening a Business*, which includes registration difficulties and financing sources; *Operational Problems*, which covers raw material sourcing, labor shortages, and supply chain constraints; *Business Expansion*, which examines growth strategies and investment efforts; *Exports*, which emphasizes export possibilities, destinations, and logistical barriers; and *Government Support*, which addresses financial assistance, regulatory incentives, and SME-targeted policies (Table 1).

Table 1- Interview Coding Classification

| Coding Category               | Description                                                                                                 |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Opening a Business            | Includes registration difficulties, financing sources, and bureaucratic challenges faced by SMEs.           |
| Operational Problems          | Covers raw material sourcing, labor shortages, supply chain constraints, and daily management issues.       |
| Business Expansion            | Examines growth strategies, investment efforts, and expansion plans for SMEs.                               |
| Exports                       | Highlights export destinations, logistical barriers, market entry challenges, and trade regulations.        |
| Government Support            | Addresses financial assistance, regulatory incentives, bureaucracy improvements, and SME-targeted policies. |
| Note: developed by the author |                                                                                                             |

To provide a more systematic overview of the interview data, Table 2 presents the frequency of key themes identified during the coding process. The numbers indicate how many enterprises in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan mentioned each issue at least once during the interviews. Since respondents often discussed more than one challenge, the total number of mentions exceeds the total number of interviewed enterprises.

Table 2 - Frequency of Barriers for SMEs Identified in Interviews

| Coding category               | Kazakhstan (n=24) | Uzbekistan (n=22) |
|-------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Access to finance             | 17                | 19                |
| Raw materials/equipment       | 15                | 9                 |
| Skilled labor shortage        | 14                | 10                |
| Export barriers               | 8                 | 5                 |
| Government support issues     | 9                 | 3                 |
| Note: developed by the author |                   |                   |

The table shows that access to finance and skilled labor shortages were common challenges in both countries, while dependence on imported raw materials and equipment was more frequently reported by Kazakhstani SMEs. In contrast, Uzbekistani respondents have fewer issues with government support programs, reflecting the more active use of subsidies, export assistance, and other state support measures in Uzbekistan.

**Results: differences in operating an SME in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan**

While there are numerous similarities in starting and operating SMEs in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, certain differences can be observed. These divergences have resulted in contrasting dynamics and opportunities for SMEs in the two countries. Table 3 outlines the main differences in operating an SME in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. In the subsequent section, the specific differences within the SME landscapes of both countries will be elaborated, highlighting the unique characteristics and challenges faced by entrepreneurs in each country.

Table 3 - Differences in Operating an SME in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan

| Category                            | Description                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Political Landscape and Reforms     | Uzbekistan has undergone significant reform since President Mirziyoyev, but it still faces bureaucratic challenges, especially in land allocation. Kazakhstan has fewer land-related issues but faces inefficiencies in land use. |
| Economic Diversification            | Uzbekistan has a more diversified economy with strong agricultural, textile, and manufacturing sectors. Kazakhstan remains heavily reliant on natural resources like oil and gas.                                                 |
| Development of the Banking System   | Uzbekistan's banking sector remains underdeveloped in rural areas with limited Islamic banking options, whereas Kazakhstan has a more liberal and developed banking system.                                                       |
| Economic Instability and Dependence | Kazakhstan experiences greater economic volatility and dependence on Russia and oil exports, while Uzbekistan's more diversified economy offers greater stability and lower vulnerability to external shocks.                     |
| Government Support for SMEs         | Uzbekistan provides more active and effective support for SMEs, particularly exporters, including tax breaks, logistical support, and export subsidies. Kazakhstan's support is less utilized and less effective in practice.     |
| Note: developed by the author       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |

#### Political Dynamics and Reform Initiatives

The political and economic progress in Uzbekistan is relatively slower than in Kazakhstan due to twenty-five years of authoritarian, conservative, and state-led governance under Islam Karimov. Even though the arrival of a new president has brought significant changes in the way of economic liberalization and modernization, there are still certain areas that require further development and improvement. Government control and bureaucracy remain in some areas.

In Uzbekistan, while the legal framework for electronic government services relating to land leases appears streamlined and efficient, farmers often encounter significant challenges in practice. Despite the apparent simplicity outlined in official documents, the process of obtaining a land plot and navigating bureaucratic procedures with local government officials [27].

In Kazakhstan, there are similar problems in the agrarian sector as in Uzbekistan, but the issue with the lease of government land plots is not as acute as in Uzbekistan. Kazakhstan possesses much more land with a significantly lower population density than Uzbekistan. According to newspaper reports, agrarians in Kazakhstan mostly mention problems with financing, climate, outdated equipment, and lack of cadres [28; 29; 30].

#### The Level of Economic Diversification

In Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, the landscape of manufacturing businesses differs in a notable way. Kazakhstan's economy is predominantly driven by the production of natural resources, including substantial assets of oil, gas, and uranium. As a result, the business sector in Kazakhstan exhibits a relatively lower level of diversification and manufacturing development. During interviews conducted in Kazakhstan, the majority of respondents represented businesses in the furniture, construction, and food production sectors. It is noteworthy that local manufacturers in Kazakhstan often rely on Russian and Chinese raw materials, accessories, assemblies, and packaging for their products, distinguishing them from their counterparts in Uzbekistan.

In Uzbekistan, the economy is characterized by a higher level of diversification compared to Kazakhstan, as it is not solely dependent on the export of natural resources. The country is renowned

for its industrial enterprises engaged in various sectors, including cotton, textile, and clothing manufacturing; agriculture with a focus on fruits, vegetables, and nuts; and the production of chemical goods and machinery.

#### **Development of a Banking System**

A significant disparity between conducting business in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan lies in the underdeveloped banking system, particularly in rural areas of Uzbekistan. Despite reforms of the banking system under the rule of the new president of Uzbekistan, there is a prevalent reliance on cash transactions in rural areas, which poses challenges to the full integration of the banking system.

Another significant factor contributing to the limited popularity of bank loans in Uzbekistan is the influence of religion. Islamic financial principles strictly prohibit the charging or payment of interest rates, deeming them as usury. According to Islamic principles, lending should be conducted on an interest-free basis. While Muslims are permitted to borrow money from Islamic banks that adhere to these principles, Uzbekistan, despite having a majority Muslim population, does not have a well-developed Islamic banking system.

In Kazakhstan, the banking system is more developed than in Uzbekistan, with bank loans being accessible to entrepreneurs at an earlier stage. Since gaining independence in 1991, Kazakhstan has adopted a more liberal economic approach compared to Uzbekistan. The country embraced international organizations and fostered cooperation with foreign partners, leading to greater openness in its economic policies. This openness facilitated the establishment of accounting firms and the provision of comprehensive training for senior staff within the banking system.

#### **Economic Instability and Dependence**

Another difference that affects local entrepreneurship and creates problems for businesses is that the unstable economy, frequent fluctuations of the local currency, and dependence on foreign economies pose significant challenges for local entrepreneurship in Kazakhstan.

In contrast to Uzbekistan, Kazakh businesses face a higher level of economic instability, price changes, and reliance on the Russian economy, the American dollar, and oil prices. This is largely due to the heavy reliance of Kazakh businesses on imported raw materials for their production. Additionally, the local currency, the tenge, is heavily dependent on the Russian ruble and the American dollar.

As Kazakhstan imports a significant number of products and raw materials from Russia and is a member of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), where the Russian Federation plays a major role, the Kazakh economy remains unstable and reliant on Russia.

The relatively stable economy of Uzbekistan can be attributed to its diversified nature, which reduces its dependence on natural resource exports. Unlike Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan's small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) primarily utilize local raw materials, resulting in more stable prices. Additionally, Uzbekistan's non-membership in the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) and lack of reliance on the Russian Federation's economy contribute to its stability. Consequently, recent geopolitical events related to the Russian-Ukrainian conflict have had a minimal impact on Uzbekistan's SMEs.

#### **Government Support for SMEs**

In both Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, the governments offer support to SMEs through a range of programs, subsidies, tax levies, and non-intervention in private entrepreneurial activity, including moratoriums on business inspections. However, the effectiveness of these support programs in practice varies between the two countries.

A higher proportion of businesses in Uzbekistan use government support compared to their counterparts in Kazakhstan. According to interviewees in Uzbekistan, business owners who engage in exporting their products outside the country avail themselves of a wide range of benefits provided by the government. These benefits include tax exemptions, assistance with logistics payments, certification of products, coverage of international exhibition and showroom costs, participation in conferences, advertisement support, provision of loans, and access to land.

Based on interviews and examination of newspapers, it appears that government subsidies are more effective in Uzbekistan compared to Kazakhstan. The president of Uzbekistan, Mirziyoyev, actively engages with local businesspeople and their representatives, demonstrating a commitment to addressing and resolving their concerns. The data from newspapers confirms that the Uzbekistani government implements special measures to support various sectors, including agriculture, greenhouse farming, rural entrepreneurship, and the textile industry.

### Conclusion

The analysis suggests that operational constraints constitute the most significant challenge for manufacturing SMEs in both countries, although their relative importance differs. Kazakhstani enterprises appear to be more affected by dependence on imported inputs, export barriers, and limited utilization of government support programs, whereas Uzbekistani entrepreneurs more frequently emphasized export opportunities and the availability of state assistance. Interview and newspaper evidence consistently identified restricted access to finance, shortages of skilled labor, and inadequate transport and logistical infrastructure as major obstacles to SME growth and competitiveness. Although Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan have improved their business environments, manufacturing development remains relatively weak, particularly in Kazakhstan. These findings should be interpreted as entrepreneurs' perceptions rather than direct evaluations of policy effectiveness.

The findings also demonstrate the relevance of Institutional Theory and Contextual Dependence Theory for explaining SME development in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. From the perspective of Institutional Theory, differences in government support, banking practices, bureaucratic procedures, and land allocation show how formal institutions shape opportunities and constraints for SMEs. Contextual Dependence Theory helps explain why similar institutional reforms produce different outcomes in the two countries. Kazakhstan's dependence on imported raw materials, exchange-rate fluctuations, and exposure to the Russian economy create a different business environment from Uzbekistan's more diversified manufacturing and agricultural base. Thus, SME development is shaped not only by formal policies but also by the historical, economic, and geographic context in which entrepreneurs operate.

The recommendations proposed in this study derive directly from the empirical findings. Governments in Central Asia should expand affordable lending programs, reduce collateral requirements, and facilitate access to start-up financing. Policymakers should also encourage domestic supplier networks, improve logistical infrastructure, and strengthen vocational and technical training programs tailored to manufacturing enterprises. Finally, the more frequent use of government support programs among Uzbekistani respondents suggests that SME assistance mechanisms in Kazakhstan could be made more accessible, transparent, and practically useful for entrepreneurs.

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## РАЗВИТИЕ МАЛОГО И СРЕДНЕГО ПРЕДПРИНИМАТЕЛЬСТВА В ПОСТСОВЕТСКОЙ ЦЕНТРАЛЬНОЙ АЗИИ: ОПЫТ КАЗАХСТАНА И УЗБЕКИСТАНА

### Аннотация

В статье рассматривается развитие малого и среднего предпринимательства (МСП) в постсоветской Центральной Азии, с акцентом на Казахстан и Узбекистан. В отличие от распространённого представления, продвигаемого международными организациями и определяющего налоги, коррупцию и бюрократическую неэффективность как основные барьеры для МСП, данное исследование выявляет иной круг глубинных проблем. Цель исследования - выявить и проанализировать ключевые операционные, институциональные и контекстуальные факторы, определяющие развитие малого и среднего предпринимательства в постсоветской Центральной Азии, на примере Казахстана и Узбекистана, с учетом особенностей локальной бизнес-среды и повседневных условий функционирования предприятий. На основе углублённых интервью и контент-анализа СМИ в работе определяются ключевые операционные барьеры, которые до сих пор остаются во многом недоисследованными. Полученные результаты показывают, что помимо институциональных и нормативных ограничений, повседневные операционные реалии существенно влияют на развитие МСП в регионе. Анализ основан на институциональной теории и теории контекстуальной зависимости, которые в совокупности объясняют, как формальные институты, исторические наследия и локальные контекстуальные факторы формируют условия функционирования МСП в различных средах. Представленные качественные данные из Казахстана и Узбекистана позволяют глубже понять структурные и контекстуальные факторы, определяющие развитие МСП в постсоветских экономиках. Полученные выводы расширяют научные представления о предпринимательстве в странах с переходной экономикой и могут быть использованы при разработке государственной политики поддержки МСП, учитывающей региональную специфику, реальные операционные потребности бизнеса и особенности институциональной среды.

**Ключевые слова:** малое и среднее предпринимательство, институциональная теория, контекстуальная зависимость, Центральная Азия, Казахстан, Узбекистан, операционные барьеры

## ПОСТКЕҢЕСТІК ОРТАЛЫҚ АЗИЯДАҒЫ ШАҒЫН ЖӘНЕ ОРТА КӘСІПкерліктің ДАМУЫ: ҚАЗАҚСТАН МЕН ӨЗБЕКСТАННЫҢ ТӘЖІРИБЕСІ

### Андатпа

Мақалада посткеңестік Орталық Азиядағы шағын және орта кәсіпкерліктің (ШОК) дамуы қарастырылады, негізгі назар Қазақстан мен Өзбекстанға аударылады. Халықаралық ұйымдар ұсынатын және салықтар, сыбайлас жемқорлық пен бюрократиялық тиімсіздікті ШОК дамуының басты кедергілері ретінде сипаттайтын кең тараған көзқарастан айырмашылығы, бұл зерттеу тереңірек және өзге сипаттағы мәселелерді анықтайды. Зерттеудің мақсаты - посткеңестік Орталық Азиядағы шағын және орта кәсіпкерліктің дамуын айқындайтын негізгі операциялық, институционалдық және контекстік факторларды Қазақстан мен Өзбекстан мысалында анықтау және талдау, сондай-ақ жергілікті бизнес ортаның ерекшеліктері мен кәсіпорындардың күнделікті қызмет ету жағдайларын ескеру. Тереңдетілген сұхбаттар мен бұқаралық ақпарат құралдарының контент-талдауы негізінде зерттеу осы уақытқа дейін жеткілікті зерттелмеген негізгі операциялық кедергілерді айқындайды. Тереңдетілген сұхбаттар мен бұқаралық ақпарат құралдарының контент-талдауы негізінде зерттеу осы уақытқа дейін жеткілікті зерттелмеген негізгі операциялық кедергілерді айқындайды. Зерттеу нәтижелері институционалдық және нормативтік шектеулерден бөлек, күнделікті операциялық шындықтардың да өңірдегі ШОК дамуына айтарлықтай әсер ететінін көрсетеді. Талдау институционалдық теория мен контекстуалдық тәуелділік теориясына сүйенеді, олар формалды институттар, тарихи мұра және жергілікті контекстік факторлардың әртүрлі ортадағы ШОК қызметін қалай қалыптастыратынын түсіндіреді. Қазақстан мен Өзбекстан бойынша алынған сапалық деректер посткеңестік экономикалардағы ШОК дамуына әсер ететін құрылымдық және контекстуалдық факторларды тереңірек түсінуге мүмкіндік береді. Нәтижелер өтпелі экономикасы бар елдердегі кәсіпкерлік туралы ғылыми түсінікті кеңейтеді және аймақтық ерекшеліктерді, бизнестің нақты операциялық қажеттіліктерін және институционалдық ортаның ерекшеліктерін ескере отырып, ШОБ-ты қолдау жөніндегі мемлекеттік саясатты әзірлеуде пайдаланылуы мүмкін.

**Негізгі сөздер:** шағын және орта кәсіпкерлік, институционалдық теория, контекстік тәуелділік, Орталық Азия, Қазақстан, Өзбекстан, операциялық кедергілер.

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#### Information about the author

Ainur Kenzhetayeva – PhD in Political Science, Assistant Professor of Political Science, Department of Social Science, Bluefield State University, Bluefield, West Virginia, USA.

E-mail: [akenzhetayeva@bluefieldstate.edu](mailto:akenzhetayeva@bluefieldstate.edu)

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1233-9936>

#### Информация об авторе

Айнур Кенжетаева – доктор философии по политическим наукам (PhD), профессор-ассистент социальных наук Университета Блуфилд, г. Блуфилд, штат Западная Вирджиния, США.

E-mail: [akenzhetayeva@bluefieldstate.edu](mailto:akenzhetayeva@bluefieldstate.edu)

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1233-9936>

#### Автор туралы ақпарат:

Айнұр Кенжетаева – саясаттану ғылымдарының философия докторы (PhD), Блуфилд мемлекеттік университетінің әлеуметтік ғылымдар кафедрасының доценті, Блуфилд қ., Батыс Вирджиния штаты, АҚШ.

E-mail: [akenzhetayeva@bluefieldstate.edu](mailto:akenzhetayeva@bluefieldstate.edu)

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1233-9936>