

# Kazakhstan: Profile of Media Ownership and Potential Foreign Influence Channels

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### Introduction

What are the entry points for foreign actors to shape and influence the narrative in the Kazakh media market? This profile seeks to address some of the entry points related to media ownership and Russian state-owned media. AidData recognizes that malign influence may affect narrative creation in other ways, including the republishing of foreign content in domestic media outlets, interactions on social media, and through journalist biases. However, this project focuses solely on direct and indirect ownership of traditional domestic media outlets to identify potential entry points for Russian influence through elites and media owners. By better understanding Kazakhstan's domestic media ownership environment, including what media outlets citizens consume and who the owners of those outlets are, we can anticipate entry points where malign actors may try to influence domestic narratives.

Media ownership in Kazakhstan is highly centralized around a few politically connected media owners tied to the family of former President Nursultan Nazarbayev.<sup>1</sup> Since owners of top media houses have the potential to influence the content and tone of topics covered by journalists in their employ, understanding who owns the media is crucial to identifying avenues for influence and potential bias in reporting. In this profile, we begin to close this gap with an in-depth look at domestic media ownership in Kazakhstan.

This media ownership profile and the supporting data were prepared by AidData, a research lab at William & Mary's Global Research Institute.<sup>2</sup> The data for this profile was collected manually by AidData staff and student research assistants. We began by conducting web searches to identify a list of media in Kazakhstan, and then identified a list of the top-ranked outlets in terms of overall consumption. We then used this information to gather the ownership data. We used cross-country sources when

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> "Journalism Funding in Kazakhstan: A Government Affair." CEU Democracy Institute: Center for Media, Data and Society. Published June 17, 2019. <u>https://cmds.ceu.edu/article/2019-06-17/journalism-funding-kazakhstan-government-affair</u>.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> This profile is part of a collaboration with the USAID E&E Bureau made possible through a buy-in to a Higher Education Solutions Network cooperative agreement (AID-A-I2-00096) in place between USAID/LAB/HESN, AidData, and William & Mary.

available (e.g., Zenith, Alexa<sup>3</sup>), as well as public opinion survey data, media watchdog sources, and other open source data.

In the following sections, we provide summary data on the presence of Russian state-owned media, top outlets, and media ownership in Kazakhstan as of 2021 (or the most contemporary data available). This profile focuses on the ownership of traditional broadcast, print, and online media outlets. Social media is not included in this analysis. By mapping out the ownership and influence of traditional forms of media, these profiles lend insights into potential channels for foreign influence in the top consumed outlets.

# Russian Media Footprints

The most direct form of Kremlin influence in Kazakhstan's media landscape is via Russian state-owned media (see Table 1). Eight of the eleven Russian state-owned media outlets we tracked have a physical presence in Kazakhstan, which provides the Kremlin with a strong channel to directly communicate with, and ultimately influence, Kazakh citizens. Physical presence includes physical infrastructure, such as cable packages, physical office space or local bureaus, and radio broadcasters, but excludes satellite broadcasting and online or streaming availability. Table 1 provides a footprint of Russian state-owned media presence in Kazakhstan, but does not speak to how well-consumed each outlet is by Kazakh citizens.

Television		Print		Radio News A		gency	
Russia I	×	Rossiyskaya Gazeta	×	Sputnik	~	TASS	~
Russia 24	$\checkmark$					Sputnik	~
Russia K	~						
RTR-Planeta	V						

Table 1:	Russian	state-owned	media	in l	Kazakhstan.	2021
	rassian	State owned	nicaia		azaki stari	2021

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Zenith is a media intelligence database that provides insights into media, including television viewership and newspaper circulation, in several dozen countries around the world. Alexa is an online analysis tool. AidData staff used Alexa's API to gauge website traffic. https://www.alexa.com/siteinfo.

TV Centre	~
Channel One	~
RT	×

Other indirect forms of Russian influence are possible, including domestic outlets republishing narratives and pro-Russian journalists in-country. In this profile, AidData has captured direct Russian channels of influence through state-owned media infrastructure.

# Top Media Outlets

Table 2 identifies the top five most-consumed media outlets in Kazakhstan by medium (e.g., television, print, radio, online) based on cross-sectional indicators such as viewership share and circulation. Television and online outlets are the top consumed mediums for information in Kazakhstan and are therefore likely more influential, while radio and print media are less consumed.<sup>4</sup> While we cannot know the exact influence of each individual outlet, we can assume that outlets that reach higher numbers of consumers have greater potential to influence more citizens. Only one Russian state-owned media outlet, Channel One Eurasia, a partial subsidiary of Channel One, is among the top outlets of Kazakhstan.

AidData used a weighted average of media consumption survey rankings from 2017 to 2021 to determine the top media outlets in Kazakhstan. This strategy offers a more long-term perspective of top media outlets, rather than a snapshot of the top media outlets right now. As such, the top outlets may not exactly reflect the current order of most consumed outlets, but do show a reasonable picture of the media landscape over the past five years. Recent rankings are weighted more heavily to adjust for new changes.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> "2019 Media Consumption and Media and Information Literacy Survey in the Countries of Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan)." The Research Institute of Public Opinion. Published 2019. <u>https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf\_docs/PA00Z2HT.pdf</u>.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Television, Print and Radio: Television, radio and print rankings were calculated using multiple publicly available surveys and circulation data, including an AidData survey of country and regional experts

Rank	Television	Print	Radio	Online
1	Channel One Eurasia	Karavan	Autoradio	Nur.kz
2	КТК	Egemen Kazakhstan	Russkoye Radio Asia	Zakon.kz
3	NTK	Kazakhstanskaya Pravda	Radio Dacha	Tengrinews.kz
4	Channel 31	Ekspress-K	Kazakh Radio	Inform.kz
5	Qazaqstan	Vremya	Radio NS	Informburo.kz

#### Table 2: Top Kazakhstan media outlets ranked by overall consumption

According to findings from an AidData survey of regional and local media experts in 2021, the majority of top Kazakh outlets mirror the results of open-source data collection by AidData researchers. However, additional outlets excluded from this top outlet list but ranked highly by local experts include the print outlet Forbes Kazakhstan; the radio stations Europa Plus, Tengri FM, and Radio Azattyk; and internet outlet Kaztag.kg.

# Media Ownership

The absence of legislation mandating transparency, coupled with insufficient institutional protections, contributes to a status quo of opaque media ownership in Kazakhstan.<sup>6</sup> As a result, AidData used unofficial, secondary sources to identify the

conducted in summer 2021. Additional survey data came from: Kantar's People-Based Television Ratings (2021), IREX's Media Sustainability Index (2018), media reports on official broadcast ratings from Liter.kz (2020) and KazInform (2019), CMDS' "Media Influence Matrix: Kazakhstan" (2019), and USAID, Internews, and Research Institute of Public Opinion's "Media Consumption and Media and Information Literacy Survey" (2019).

Online: Alexa (April 2021) and Zero.kz (2021).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> "Kazakhstan 2018: Media Sustainability Index." International Research and Exchanges Board. Published 2018.

https://www.irex.org/sites/default/files/pdf/media-sustainability-index-europe-eurasia-2018-kazakhstan.p\_df.

owner names and shares of privately-owned media. Further examples of ownership ties and relationships are discussed in the results section.

Table 3 lists the ownership information of top Kazakh media outlets by medium (e.g., television, newspaper, radio, and online). The seven Kazakh state-owned media outlets are color-coded blue. AidData staff categorized the remaining privately held media outlets based upon the level of Russian ownership that might increase their susceptibility to Kremlin influence. These categories are denoted by an increasing saturation of red—no known Russian ties (no color), suspected Russian ties, known Russian ties, and direct Russian ownership. In Kazakhstan, four owners had suspected or known ties to the Russian government, and one top outlet had direct Russian ownership.

No Russia '	an ties Suspected Russian ties		rect Russian Local state mership media	-owned
Medium	Rank Outlet	Owner, Company	Owner, Individuals	Owner (%)
		Government of Kazakhstar	n	80
			Government of Russia	6.84
	1 Channel One Furasia		VTB Bank	6.58
	Editable	Channel One JSC	National Media Group	3.9
			Sogaz	2.68
Television	2 KTK	Commercial Television Channel JSC	Dariga Nazarbayeva	100
	3 NTK	Commercial Television Channel JSC	Dariga Nazarbayeva	100
		Verny Capital JSC	Bulat Utemuratov	80
	4 Channel 31		Ivan Tavrin	15
		CTC Media Inc	Bank Rossiya	5
	5 Qazaqstan TV	Government of Kazakhstar	n	100
Print	1 Karavan	Kazakhstan Today Agency LLP Dariga Nazarbayeva		100
	2 Egemen Kazakhstan	Government of Kazakhstar	100	
	3 Kazakhstanskaya Pravda	Government of Kazakhstar	100	

#### Table 3: Ownership of top Kazakh media outlets by share

	4 Ekspress-K	Eurasian Insurance Company JSC	Unknown	Unknown
			Igor Mazhinov	58.2
	5 Vremya	Vremya Publishing House LLP	Nurzhan Subkhanberdin	41.8
	1 Autoradio	Autoradio Kazakhstan LLP	Askar Kantarbayev	100
	Pueskava Dadia	Russian Telegraph	Unknown	Unknown
– Radio	2 Russkoye Radio Asia	DLS Group Holding Company LLP	Unknown	Unknown
	3 Radio Dacha	Krutev Madia Haldina	Mikhail Gutseriev	75
	3 Radio Dacha	Krutoy Media Holding	Igor Krutoy	25
	4 Kazakh Radio	Government of Kazakhstan	100	
	5 Radio NS	Government of Kazakhstan		51
	2 KACIO INS	Nur Otan Political Party	49	
- Online -	1 Nur.kz	Internet Portal Nur LLP	Kuat Bakhridinov	100
		Verinfo Commons LLD	Anna Kiselev	Unknown
	2 Zakon.kz	Yurinfo Company LLP	Sergei Kiselev	Unknown
	2. Tan anin ann la	Alash Madia Cusur	Batyr Kazybayev	Unknown
	3 Tengrinews.kz	Alash Media Group	Dinara Temirova	Unknown
	4 Inform.kz	Government of Kazakhstan	100	
	5 Informburo.kz	Verny Capital JSC	Bulat Utemuratov	100

# Results

### Television

Television is the most consumed source of information in Kazakhstan, with 59.5% of Kazakh citizens relying on television for news.<sup>7</sup> Owners with ties to the Kazakh and/or Russian governments dominate the television sector in Kazakhstan. The fifth most-consumed television channel, Qazaqstan TV, is fully owned by the government of Kazakhstan.

The most-consumed television channel, Channel One Eurasia, is 80% owned by the government of Kazakhstan and 20% by the Russian government through a number of state-owned agencies and companies. Channel One Eurasia rebroadcasts some

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> "2019 Media Consumption and Media and Information Literacy Survey in the Countries of Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan)." The Research Institute of Public Opinion. Published 2019.

content from Russia's Channel One. Notably, the former President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev's daughter, Dariga Nazarbayeva, may be the true beneficiary of Channel One Eurasia. A powerful force in Kazakhstan, Nazarbayeva was formerly the Chair of the Senate and is currently a member of the Mazhilis. She is also a major player in the media space, owning the second and third most-consumed television outlets, KTK and NTK, respectively. Nazarbayeva also founded state-owned television outlet Khabar TV, and reportedly owns Karavan, the most-consumed print outlet in Kazakhstan, as well.

Nazarbayeva is often not the official owner of the outlets that she owns and controls. However, her former husband Rakhat Aliyev admitted that she held stake in Karavan, NTK, and KTK before his arrest in 2014.<sup>8</sup> Additionally, multiple articles about Nazarbayeva's control over Channel One Eurasia, NTK, and KTK assert that she is the sole owner of the majority of the top outlets in Kazakhstan.<sup>9</sup> This ownership puts the Nazarbayev family in direct control of the majority of Kazakhstan television outlets.

The only top television outlet that the Kazakh government or the Nazarbayev family does not directly own is Channel 31. Kazakh billionaire Bulat Utemuratov owns a controlling stake in the outlet, as well as in the fifth most-consumed online outlet, Informburo.kz. Notably, Utemuratov is in the Nazarbayev family's inner circle, giving the former president's family influence in every top television outlet.<sup>10</sup> The founder of Channel 31, Armanzhan Baitasov, sold the remaining 20% of shares to Russian media company CTC Media Inc. Russian oligarch Alisher Usmanov formerly owned a 75% stake in CTC Media before selling his shares to his long-time business partner Ivan Tavrin.<sup>11</sup> Bank Rossiya, a Russian publicly traded bank, owns the remaining 25% of

https://cmds.ceu.edu/sites/cmcs.ceu.hu/files/attachment/basicpage/1602/mimkazakhstanfunding.pdf. <sup>10</sup> "Bulat Utemuratov." Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP). Published October 6, 2021. https://kiar.center/bulat-utemuratov/.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Mamashuly, Asylkhan. "Направление «Каравана» менялось каждый раз со сменой владельца." Radio Azattyk. Published July 27, 2011.

https://rus.azattyq.org/a/karawan\_newspaper\_/24277868.html.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> "Kazakhstan: Well-Connected Tycoon Snaps Up TV Station." Eurasianet. Published December 10, 2015. https://eurasianet.org/kazakhstan-well-connected-tycoon-snaps-up-tv-station; Nussipov, Adil. "Media Influence Matrix: Kazakhstan." CEU Democracy Institute: Center for Media, Data and Society. Published June 2019.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> Smirnov, Sergei. "Алишер Усманов продаст телевизионный бизнес." Vedemosti. Published December 13, 2017.

https://www.vedomosti.ru/technology/articles/2017/12/13/745133-usmanov-telebiznesa.

shares in CTC Media through Telcrest Investments. Shareholders of Bank Rossiya include Yury Kovalchuk and Gennady Timchenko, Russian oligarchs and friends of President Vladimir Putin.<sup>12</sup> In sum, Kazakh oligarch Bulat Utemuratov owns the majority of Channel 31, while Russian political and business elites own a minority stake in the Kazakh channel.

Top television outlets in Kazakhstan are highly vulnerable to Russian influence. The Russian government and Russian elites own significant minority shares in Channel One Eurasia and Channel 31, allowing them direct access to the Kazakh population. Additionally, the concentration of outlets in the hands of Kazakhstan's political elite, namely Dariga Nazarbayeva and Bulat Utemuratov, creates further vulnerabilities for the Kremlin to exploit.

#### Print

Like television, top print media outlets in Kazakhstan are controlled by the Kazakh government and connected political elites. Both the second and third most-consumed print outlets, Egemen Kazakhstan and Kazakhstanskaya Pravda, respectively, are state-owned. Additionally, Dariga Nazarbayeva owns Karavan, the most-consumed newspaper.

Ekspress-K, the fourth most-consumed print outlet,<sup>13</sup> has opaque ownership. According to public documents on the Kazakhstan Stock Exchange (KASE), Eurasian Insurance Company, one of the country's largest insurance agencies, is the sole owner of Ekspress-K.<sup>14</sup> This is further evidenced by the fact that Express-K advertises job vacancies for other Eurasian Resource Group subsidiaries on their website. However, there is disagreement regarding the ownership of Eurasian Insurance Company. Led by

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> Bazenkova, Anastasia. "CTC Media Sells Russian Television Stations to Billionaire Usmanov." The Moscow Times. Published September 25, 2015.

https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2015/09/25/ctc-media-sells-russian-television-stations-to-billionaire-usmanov-a49836.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> In June 2021, Ekspress-K published their final print issue and fully moved to an online version of the site, called Exk.kz. Nurullin, Eldar. "Вышел в свет последний номер газеты «Экспресс К.»" Express-K. Published June 25, 2021.

https://exk.kz/news/98868/vyshiel-v-sviet-posliednii-nomier-ghaziety-ekspriess-k.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> "Листинговой комиссии по простым акциям АО "Страховая компания 'Евразия.'" Kazakhstan Stock Exchange. Published November 28, 2005. <u>https://kase.kz/files/emitters/SKEA/skea\_list.pdf</u>

CEO Boris Umanov,<sup>15</sup> the Eurasian Insurance Company is owned by Eurasian Resource Group (ERG), one of the largest mining and metallurgy companies operating in Kazakhstan.<sup>16</sup> The ownership structure of ERG is complex and opaque, with some foreign ownership and ownership by Kazakh elites.

The fifth most-consumed print outlet in Kazakhstan is Vremya. Igor Mazhinov, the Chairman of Bank RBK, founded the newspaper and continues to own a controlling stake in Vremya through Shanyrak Trade LLC. Mazhinov is among the most influential businessmen in Kazakhstan and is the son-in-law of Vladimir Kim, a highly connected Kazakh billionaire.<sup>17</sup> Another Kazakh billionaire, Nurzhan Subkhanberdin, owns the remaining 41.8% of shares in Vremya.<sup>18</sup>

Like television, print ownership in Kazakhstan is dominated by the government and political elites. Nazarbayeva and the government of Kazakhstan own the top three print outlets, whereas one of the largest mining companies owns Ekspress-K and two Kazakh oligarchs control Vremya. As noted, this highly concentrated ownership system provides significant vulnerabilities to Russian influence in the print sector.

### Radio

Radio is the least-consumed medium for news, with only 5.6% of Kazakh citizens using radio as a source of information.<sup>19</sup> While radio is less consumed in Kazakhstan than other mediums, the ownership structure of radio outlets follows the same pattern as print and television of centralization around political elites and the Kazakh government. The government of Kazakhstan wholly owns Kazakh Radio, the fourth most-consumed radio station, and partially owns, along with Nursultan Nazarbayev's ruling Nur Otan Party, Radio NS, the fifth most-consumed radio station.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> "Management." Eurasian Insurance Company JSC. <u>https://theeurasia.kz/en/about/company-management/</u>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> "Our Business." Eurasian Resource Group. <u>https://www.erg.kz/en/content/o-kompanii</u>.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> "Igor Mazhinov." Forbes Kazakhstan. Published 2015. <u>https://forbes.kz/ranking/object/814</u>.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> "Nurzhan Subkhanberdin's estate - on the Cote d'Azur and the size of the Vatican." Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP). Published April 15, 2021.

https://kiar.center/nurzhan-subkhanberdins-estate-on-the-cote-dazur-and-the-size-of-the-vatican/. <sup>19</sup> "2019 Media Consumption and Media and Information Literacy Survey in the Countries of Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan)." The Research Institute of Public Opinion. Published 2019.

Askar Kantarbayev owns the most-consumed radio station, Autoradio, along with Dala FM, another radio station in Kazakhstan.<sup>20</sup> Although he owns multiple radio stations, Kantarbayev has considerably fewer connections to the Kazakhstan ruling elite than many of the other media owners in this report.

The second most-consumed station is Russkoye Radio Asia, a Kazakh branch of Russian "Russkoye Radio." While the individual ownership of Russkoye Radio Asia is opaque, AidData staff found that the outlet is partially owned by Russian Telegraph LLC, a Russian media company, and partially owned by DLS Group, a Kazakh company.<sup>21</sup> Russian billionaire Mikhail Gutseriev has a majority stake in the third most-consumed radio outlet, Radio Dacha. Gutseriev is politically connected and sanctioned for his ties to Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko.<sup>22</sup> Igor Krutoy, the founder of Krutoy Media Holding and famed Russian musician, sold Gutseriev a 75% stake in Krutoy Media Holding, the parent company of Radio Dacha in 2013.<sup>23</sup>

Russian influence is apparent in top radio stations, as both Russkoye Radio Asia and Radio Dacha have Russian owners. Additionally, centralized government ownership can create further vulnerabilities to Russian influence in Kazakhstan.

### Online

While the government of Kazakhstan maintains a large presence in top online outlets, there is more diversity in owners among online outlets. However, most top online outlets still promote pro-government views. The fourth most-consumed online outlet, Inform.kz, is state-owned.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> Nussipov, Adil. "Media Influence Matrix: Kazakhstan." CEU Democracy Institute: Center for Media, Data and Society. Published June 2019.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> Nussipov, Adil. "Media Influence Matrix: Kazakhstan." CEU Democracy Institute: Center for Media, Data and Society. Published June 2019.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> Tognini, Giacomo. "Tracker: In-Depth Look At 20 Russian Billionaires Hit By Sanctions." Forbes. Published March 1, 2022.

https://www.forbes.com/sites/giacomotognini/2022/03/01/tracker-in-depth-look-at-20-russian-billionaire s-hit-by-sanctions/?sh=541a8ac3ce7a.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> "Krutoy Media radio stations acquired by Mikhail Gutseriev structures." Krutoy Media Holding. Published January 29, 2013. <u>http://www.krutoymedia.ru/eng/news/244.htm</u>.

Kuat Bakhridinov owns and operates the most-consumed online outlet—pro-government Nur.kz. Bakhridinov does not appear to have ties to the government despite his pro-government views.<sup>24</sup>

Sergei Kiselev and his wife Anna founded and own the second most-consumed online outlet, Zakon.kz, also known for its pro-government views. Until February 2022, Kiselev worked as the CEO of Channel One Eurasia, the top television channel in the country, purportedly owned by Dariga Nazarbayeva.<sup>25</sup> Similarly, Tengrinews.kz, the third most-consumed online outlet, also holds pro-government views.<sup>26</sup> Through Alash Media Group, Batyr Kazybayev and Dinara Temirova own and control Tengrinews.kz, as well as radio stations Tengri FM and Zhuldyz FM.

Lastly, the fifth most-consumed online outlet is Informburo.kz, owned by its founder, Bulat Utemuratov. The Kazakh billionaire is also the majority owner of the fourth most-consumed television outlet, Channel 31. Utemuratov holds close ties to the Nazarbayev family and promotes pro-government content in his outlets as well.<sup>27</sup>

In sum, while the ownership is slightly more diverse among top online outlets, the narratives promoted by these outlets are pro-government. However, the diversity of owners, coupled with the fact that all top online owners are domestic citizens, does slightly diminish the potential for Russian influence through ownership in top online media outlets in Kazakhstan.

# Conclusion

In this brief, we have presented an overview of the domestic media ownership environment of Kazakhstan. The collected data highlight two trends in Kazakh media

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> Nussipov, Adil. "Media Influence Matrix: Kazakhstan." CEU Democracy Institute: Center for Media, Data and Society. Published June 2019.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> "Sergey Kiselev confirmed KazTAG's information about his departure from the Eurasia TV channel." KazTAG. Published February 22, 2022.

https://kaztag.kz/ru/news/sergey-kiselev-podtverdil-informatsiyu-kaztag-o-svoem-ukhode-s-telekanala-ev raziya.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> Nussipov, Adil. "Media Influence Matrix: Kazakhstan." CEU Democracy Institute: Center for Media, Data and Society. Published June 2019.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup> "Bulat Utemuratov." Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP). Published October 6, 2021.

ownership. First, most top outlets are either directly or indirectly connected to the Kazakh ruling elite. Second, Kazakh media outlets are highly vulnerable to Russian influence.

Top Kazakh media outlets center around the Nazarbayev family and the Kazakh government. Of the twenty measured top outlets across mediums, seven are owned by the government, three are owned by Dariga Nazarbayeva, and three more are owned by individuals in Nazarbayev's inner circle, namely Bulat Utemuratov and Sergei Kiselev. Of the remaining seven outlets that do not have a direct connection to the Nazarbayev family, Nur.kz and Tengrinews.kz promote pro-government views and Vremya is owned by the son-in-law of Vladimir Kim, who is a member of Nazarbayev's inner circle as well.<sup>28</sup> Ultimately, the only top outlets that are not actively tied to the government or members of the ruling party are controlled by foreign owners.

This highly centralized media system creates significant vulnerabilities to Russian influence. The Russian government has the ability to influence a significant portion of the Kazakh population through just influencing the Nazarbayev family. Additionally, the Russian government directly owns one top outlet, Channel One Eurasia, and has a significant presence through state-owned media outlets in Kazakhstan. Additionally, Russian oligarchs with ties to the Kremlin own shares in top Kazakhstan outlets, including Channel 31, Radio Dacha, and Russkoye Radio Asia.

In sum, the Kazakhstan media space has many channels for Russian influence, including both potential and actual vulnerabilities. Russian direct ownership and a highly centralized media market create numerous opportunities for the Russian government to influence narratives consumed by Kazakh citizens.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup> Patrucic, Miranda, Ilya Lozovsky, and OCCRP Kazakhstan. "Secretive Offshore Maneuvers Enriched Unofficial Third Wife of Kazakhstani Leader Nursultan Nazarbayev." Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP). Published October 3, 2021.

https://www.occrp.org/en/the-pandora-papers/secretive-offshore-maneuvers-enriched-unofficial-third-wife-of-kazak hstani-leader-nursultan-nazarbayev.