

KAZAKH AND US COOPERATION IN COUNTERACTING RELIGIOUS EXTREMISM

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Abstract: This article analyzes the Kazakh and US relations in counteracting religious extremism. Theoretically the research is based on the works of foreign and national researchers on the analytics of extremism phenomenon, as well as those who have made a considerable contribution to studying various tendencies and mechanisms of religious extremism manifestation in the context of modern political processes. When writing this article, methodological approaches of institutional, specifically historical, systematic, structural and functional, and comparative analysis, as well as the phenomenological analysis technique were productively used. Some results of the research can be recommended as efficient tools for preventing and struggling against religious extremism in the state structures of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

Keywords: The Republic of Kazakhstan, the USA, religious extremism, terrorism, state policy.

INTRODUCTION

After acquiring its independence, Kazakhstan started forming an individual line of the external policy. During the Soviet period the country had not had any external political traditions because the external relations were focused in the union center, thus, Kazakhstan had to establish them almost from the very beginning.

After the collapse of the USSR the independent Kazakhstan happened to get a large territory with the long and unprotected boundaries, scarcely populated, and underdeveloped transportation and communication system. The economy of the Soviet Kazakhstan was entirely focused on functioning within the all-Union system of labor allocation. The whole regions were tied more to the external rather than internal markets. There was almost nothing that bound them to one another, except for administrative belonging to one state. Kazakh regions differed greatly according to their economic structure, production nature, demographic and national composition, too. On the global arena, Kazakhstan faced new problems related to its own external policy, defense and national safety, and individual entrance to the global economy and global community.

The external policy is a general course of the state in international relations. The external policy regulates relations of one state with other states and peoples in accordance with its principles and goals achieved by using various techniques and methods. Diplomacy is the most important tool of the external policy. The

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external policy is intricately related to the internal policy of the state (Kazakh External Policy, 1995).

RESEARCH METHODS

When researching the Kazakh and US relations in counteracting religious extremism, the authors have been based on general research methods that at the same time act as special political methods: system analysis, structural and functional analysis, comparative method, institutional approach, etc.

RESEARCH RESULTS

After acquiring the state independence, Kazakhstan was a product of unordinary synthesis between various ways of carrying out economic activity that included nomadic cattle breeding, settled agriculture, and industrial reclamation of rich raw resources. According to the French researcher Catrie Poujeole, Kazakhstan combined the synthesis of various Islamic and Orthodox confessional flows with some political and social constructions that included or excluded the tradition and modernity. As a result, internally Kazakhstan entirely reflects its original state that comes from the synthesis of the European model transplanted from Russia, and internal Turkic and Muslim core that was maintained in the traditional area. It formed the polyethnic, multi-confessional nature of the Kazakh society (Nazarbaev 1991).

Such mixture of traditional Eastern and West-focused society could but not bother global leaders. Consequently, analytical structures of the global society started actively researching possible ways of developing the situation in the Central Asia, as a whole, and in Kazakhstan, in particular. Thus, in his research "Missioners of Islam in Central Asia" the Turkish researcher B. Balji made the following conclusions (Nazarbaev 1991): Turkish and Arabic Islamists purposefully work with representatives of the elite of the region countries, and in addition, broadly cover other strata of the population for educational purposes. Such schools graduate young people with the Islamic ideology, accurately worked out stereotypes, and a specific mindset. This is not always vivid Islamism. The majority of such schools, especially Turkish, disguise themselves as social. Taking into account long-term perspective, there is purposeful activity aiming at future bringing up generations with a new culturally civilized focus on the Islamic Middle East. Herewith, Turkish missioners, voluntarily or involuntarily, play into the hands of Arabic Islamism. The only method to avoid the fatal way of development when in the future the government will be formed by people with Arabic as native or close language is further establishment of nationally focused states, bringing up a young generation in the national and patriotic spirit, and finishing the establishment of states-nations in the Central Asia.

In the context of the total mess of the late 1991 – early 1992s when few people had a rather vivid idea of how the general geo-political tendency in the post-Soviet space would develop, the West accurately formed its interests and singled out the main priorities and goals. At that time basic threats the West was afraid of were formed. They include the threat of Islamic fundamentalism of the Central Asia.

In its turn, Kazakhstan also defined basic threats for the national identity and areas of its external political activity. The external policy of the republic is based on the principle of multi-vector nature of the external policy. According to the President N. Nazarbaev, multi-vector nature means “the development of friendly and predictable interrelations with all states that play important roles in the global affairs and are of practical interest for our country. Due to its geo-political location and economic potential, Kazakhstan must not be focused on merely regional problems. Not only our multi-national population, but also the whole global community would not understand it. The future of Kazakhstan is related to Asia, Europe, the East and the West. Pursuing such policy, we can exclude any threats for the Kazakhstan safety. We can strengthen favorable external conditions of economic and political transformations in our country” (Nazarbaev 1991).

Based on the concept of the multi-vector external policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the United States of America is the most important partner of Kazakhstan in the West. It has a direct impact on the geo-politics of the Central Asian region and consequently – on the safety of Kazakhstan.

In its turn, it was extremely important for Washington to develop bilateral relations with new independent states that were formed after the collapse of the USSR in the context of peaceful close cooperation. It is associated with the Concept of National Safety that dominated in the USA after the collapse of the bi-polar world formation (Statement by the President Bush, 1991). Thus, the national safety is threatened by the activity or a succession of events that can essentially decrease the quality of life of this state’s citizens or narrow the range of the political choice for the government of this state within a short period of time (Novikov 1994). In a narrower sense, the main goal of the USA is the ideology and aims at contributing to spreading the market economy and democracy in the world (A National Security Strategy for a New Century, 1997).

The importance of the region for the USA is, first of all, defined by its location between Russian and China. The USA does its best not to allow the formation of any “Euro-Asian empire” that could challenge it. Only Russia and China are possible candidates. In the context of this interest, it pursues the policy of supporting the sovereignty of independent states including Kazakhstan.

RESULTS DISCUSSION

After the events that took place on September 11, 2011, the US external political contours have cardinally changed and pointed at a new stage in the Kazakh and

US relations. Kazakhstan coarsely criticized the terrorist attacks that took place in Washington and New York and supported the US anti-terrorist campaign in Afghanistan (Statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan Due to Terrorist Attacks in the USA in September 11, 1999). The Kazakh support for the US anti-terrorist operations in Afghanistan and Iraq was highly estimated by the US. Due to it, it was natural for N. Nazarbaev to visit the USA for the fifth time. It took place on December 18-21, 2001 (Nurgaliev 2006). During the meeting, the Kazakh and US leaders discussed the issues related to ensuring international and regional safety, as well as further development of the bilateral cooperation in this area. According to the negotiations results, N. Nazarbaev and George Bush made a joint statement about the Kazakh and US relations that confirmed the mutual interest in strengthening long-term strategic partnership between Kazakhstan and the United States.

Thus, the beginning of the new millennium marked a new stage in developing the Kazakh and US cooperation for Kazakhstan. Now one of the most prioritized aspects of the cooperation between Washington and Astana is the area of safety.

The attention the United States started paying to the Central Asian Region is not occasional. Thus, the collapse of the USSR and establishment of new independent state formations in Eurasia became a factor of destabilizing a system of global and regional relations. On the territory of the Central Asia the vacuum of political impact occurred. It caused the escalation in the region and emergence of new conflicts. Three powers – terrorism, extremism and separatism emerging and spreading in this region after the Cold War – started seriously threatening safety and stability of all countries and influencing the peace and development of the region.

Investigating this theme, Kazakh researchers have come to the conclusion that today's widely spread Islamic extremism and terrorism originated from those roots of national liberation movements that had caused the emergence of new independent states at the place of former colonies of former capitalistic countries in the 1950-1960s. The first manifestations of extremism and terrorism in these countries were supported not only by internal ideological and socio-cultural resources, but also by external ones, including the global centers of geo-political impact. This process was renewed in the 1970-1980s when the geo-political struggle for a number of countries of the Middle East sometimes indirectly obtained a unilateral Islamic ideological rhetoric. In other words, the Islamic ideology turned into a convenient tool to protect their geological interests by the global centers of impact (Kosichenko and Ashimbaev 2002).

Special services of the global centers of geo-political impact that acted on sufferance of their political management played as an important role (Laumulin, 2006). It means that Islamic extremism and terrorism as an ideological tool became a product of not only national elites of Islamic states who successfully appealed to

their population, but from the very emergence it was also rather vividly supported externally. That is why these are not only the pro-Islamic national elites of the Near and Middle East who bear the responsibility for all negative and harmful consequences of Islamic extremism and terrorism.

A gradual increase in the impact of internal and external tendencies on the development of Islamic extremism and terrorism in the Muslim world caused the global ideological counteraction of two “religious worlds” in the early XXIst century. It replaced the social bi-polar world of the XXth century. The basic reasons of such global counteraction that had been sustainably supported during the spread of Islamic extremism and terrorism were stipulated by the following circumstances (Laumulin 2006).

Firstly, one of the reasons why Islamic extremism and terrorism were spread was that modernizing impact of the advanced Western world on the lagging behind “new” Islamic countries ignored interior ethno-cultural peculiarities of these societies.

Secondly, in Islamic countries the spread of Islamic extremism and terrorism came with strengthening of authoritative tendencies that had occurred under the golden age of Islamic ideology. This ideology was as actual as never before for radical national elites. Thus, strengthening of authoritative tendencies under the religious flag in a number of countries of the Near and Middle East was a natural reaction to the invasion of Western values.

Thirdly, important pre-requisites for spreading Islamic extremism and terrorism in a number of Muslim countries were also formed by those inevitable expenses that had occurred when carrying out social and economic modernization in these states. Unpredictable economic development, the lack of considerable social return from modernizing reforms, distrust to the ability of the ruling elite to quickly overcome social and economic difficulties created pre-requisites for appealing to Islamic ideals of social justice, truly Islamic way of governing and return to so-called “golden past”.

Fourthly, the process of spreading Islamic extremism and terrorism in a number of Muslim countries obtained an additional impulse under the impact of the archaization tendency. It created an unconditional pre-requisite for strengthening the role of Islamic tradition as a regulator of social relations, as well as its impact on ruling elites. Ruling elites of some Islamic countries stated about excluding the Islamic religion from the “political turnover”, and actually used it as a tool in the political struggle trying to deprive their competitors from the monopoly for Islam. This is where a new role of Islam in the modern policy emerged (Laumulin 2006).

Kazakh political analysts single out historical and cultural grounds of these evils spread as the second factor of developing Islamic terrorism and extremism. Thus, they write “Most probably, due to the fact that in the XXth century no separately

taken modern national culture in Muslim countries could counteract the unification influenced by globalization, this function was fulfilled by Islam that least of all acknowledges national boundaries and has its mental rootedness and susceptibility. Practical implementation of this process inevitably caused radical politization of Islam, i.e. its occurrence in political relations. First of all, this process covered Muslim regions with the traditionally high level of religiosity of population whose religious mental outlook almost entirely coincided with historical and cultural, and consequently, with social and political aspects. This process became especially acute in terms of values” (Laumulin 2006).

In terms of the global safety, from the very beginning politization of radical Islam has acquired negative focus. Extremely expressed, political radicalization of Islam with other circumstances contributed to occurring and forming of extremism and terrorism based on religion. In a complex of reasons and conditions wide-spreading of politicized radical Islam that caused the emergence of extremism and terrorism had a number of socio-cultural grounds.

According to Kazakh authors, the third factor that influenced spreading of religious and political extremism and terrorism is related to the worldview grounds. Within the Muslim religion, the doctrine of the holy war of the XXth century “Jihad” is a vivid example of justifying violation. It was used by the most radical followers of Islam to achieve their religious and political goals (Laumulin 2006). In this case the manifestations of Islamic extremism and terrorism had such worldview ground where provisions proving the validity of violation in religious relations or those that could contribute to forming such sets in believers’ consciousness acquired a special role.

CONCLUSION

After the events that took place on September, 11, the Kazakh and US relations have acquired a more dynamic and seamless nature. Since 2003, the governmental cooperation and timeliness of exchanging information about terrorist and extremist organizations between Kazakhstan and the United States have considerably improved. Thus, due to this fact, in 2014 the National Security Committee jointly with the Ministry for Internal Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan neutralized the terrorist grouping “Mujahideen’s Jamaat of the Central Asia” (in English-speaking countries it is more often called as “Islamic Jihad”) (Report of State Department of the USA “Global Terrorism in 2014”).

In September 2004, in accordance with Article 21 of the Law “On Struggle Against Terrorism”, the Supreme Court forbade the activity of the following terrorist and extremist organizations on the territory of the republic: Al-Kaeda, Islamic Party of the Eastern Turkestan, Kurd People’s Congress, and Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (Report “Specificity of Displaying Terrorism and Extremism in Central

Asia: 2004). In 2017 this list was supplemented with 7 other organizations: “Asbat al-Ansar”, “Muslim Brothers”, “Boz Qurd”, “Mujahideen’s Jamaat of the Central Asia”, “Laskar-e-Taiba”, “Taliban”, and “Society of Social Reforms” (Fight Against Terrorism and Extremism). As a whole, now 16 terrorist and extremist organizations are forbidden in Kazakhstan. In addition to the above, they include “Allia Ayat”, “Aum Sinrike”, Organization of Eastern Turkestan Liberation, “Hizb-ut-Tahrir al-Islami”, and “Soldiers of the Caliphate” (Official Website of the Committee for National Safety of the Republic of Kazakhstan).

In 2005, the law of the Republic of Kazakhstan “On Amending Some Legislative Acts of the Republic of Kazakhstan on Issues Related to Countering Extremism” was adopted.

Extremism in Kazakhstan is peculiar of various missionaries who are the most dangerous in terms of extremism. They nurture seeds of religious extremism in people’s minds. Essentially, their activity is the ideological basis of terrorism (Vice-Minister of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan Shpekbaev A.). The official position of the General Procuracy of the Republic of Kazakhstan follows this statement. Seemingly harmless missionaries who impose extremist views in the public consciousness are of the greatest danger in Kazakhstan. The Minister of Culture, Information and Public Consensus of the Republic of Kazakhstan of that time Mukhtar Kul-Muhammed stated the danger of religious unions for Kazakhstan. He said that Kazakhstan would strengthen control over the activity of religious organizations (Streshnev 2002). According to the Minister, due to its geo-political position, uniqueness of ethnic composition, the republic holds a special place in expansion plans of foreign religious centers, including on spreading ideas of religious radicalism and extremism.

The cases under consideration allow to reveal the following tendencies related to manifesting of terrorism and extremism in Kazakhstan.

Firstly, Kazakhstan happened to be involved in the activity of international terrorist organizations.

Secondly, there is a real threat of involving Kazakhs in international terrorist organizations. People are recruited mainly on the religious basis among followers of radical flows of Islam, in particular, Wahhabism. Herewith, these are mainly poor and unsettled people.

Thirdly, taking into account that on the territory of Kazakhstan there are diplomatic and commercial establishments of foreign countries, including the USA, Great Britain, Israel, etc. that have already been attacked by international terrorists, there is a threat that similar events may take place in Kazakhstan (Report “Specificity of Displaying Terrorism and Extremism in Central Asia: 2004 Results” Made by the Center of Anti-Terrorism Programs).

All these issues, this way or another, had an impact on strengthening the measures aiming at counteracting terrorism and extremism by the state.

Thus, the Kazakh and US relations had a close nature of interrelations after the USA had declared a total war to the international terrorism, and namely its shelter in Afghanistan, which war the government of Kazakhstan entirely supported.

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