

Islam in the Context of Political Processes in Modern Kazakhstan

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Abstract—Religion revival including Islam in Kazakhstan represents reaction, first of all on internal social and political change, events after disintegration of the USSR. Process of revival of Kazakhstan Islam was accompanied as positive, so by negative tendencies. Old mosques were restored, were under construction new, Islamic schools and high schools were created, was widely studied religious the dogmatic person, the corresponding literature was published, expanded contacts with foreign Muslim brothers in the faith, the centers of the Arab-Muslim culture extended.

At the same time in Kazakhstan, there are religious-political parties and movements, pursuing radical goals down to change the spiritual and cultural identity of Muslims of Kazakhstan by the forcible introduction of non-traditional religious and political, ethnic and cultural values.

Keywords—Terrorist act, Islamic factor, national tasks, radical Islam, the role of Islam.

I. INTRODUCTION

STATES of the former Soviet Union are undergoing a complex and ambiguous process of national reconstruction, stabilization of socio-economic relations, achievement of consensus among various social groups. This fully applies to Kazakhstan, which is a multicultural society, characterized by fairly vague forms of national identification.

The essential role in stabilization and society integration, achievement of political consent belongs to religion. And it is quite natural. Various faiths have centuries-old experience of communication both with the individual, and with society as a whole. Religious leaders feel and understand moods and needs of masses. Religious doctrines have powerful intellectual and spiritual potential. Without research of problems of interaction and interference of religion and policy it is hardly possible to understand the modern world.

Special activity in modern political processes is displayed by Islam –the "youngest" of world religions. The number of its followers is growing from year to year. Islam has a serious influence on minds and hearts of hundreds of millions people in the countries of Asia and Africa, and it has to be reckoned with as a real force. It should be emphasized that political and intellectual activity of Muslims accrues not only in the

countries of the East, but also the West. Islamic revival also reveals itself in Kazakhstan.

Strengthening of positions of Islam causes an ambiguous response in world public opinion. It is obvious that the world of Islam isn't uniform, and on this background reaction to activity of radical organizations is quite explainable. Researchers will have to answer a number of questions. Whether Islam really comprises conflicting potential contradicting the rules of modern society and state? What manifestations of Islam represent public interest and can have consequences, significant for political processes in the Republic of Kazakhstan and other regions of Central Asia?

Search of answers to these questions seems to be extremely opportune for even in Kazakhstan with the developed orientalist tradition Islam yet has not become a subject of relevant political and social research. Even exact number of Muslims in Kazakhstan is unknown as existing ways of assessment are often based on ethnic criteria, and, respectively, religious factor is in most cases substituted by the ethnic.

Authors of analytical investigations on the subject represented in this article focus their attention on interaction of politics and ethics, politics and economics, politics and law. Complex and deep-laid links of religion with other public spheres didn't become a subject of profound research interest. Mainly only general regularities and peculiarities of religion-state relations are mentioned.

In Kazakhstan Islam has become an essential factor of social and political life. The effect of this factor can't be narrowed only to fulfillment of extremist goals by certain groups of Islam followers [1]. It is considerably broader and includes, besides all, political activity of moderate Islamic forces. Kazakhstan has become one of the few countries of the former Soviet Union which has maintained stability and an interfaith consent. The president of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Chairman of Assembly of the peoples of Kazakhstan N.A.Nazarbayev at the XVII session of APK, declared: «Kazakhstan is the only place in the world where Muslims, orthodox, Catholics, Protestants, Buddhists, Jews live in consent. This is a unique place where they can come together and speak about all their problems [1].

Thereof Kazakhstan has managed to succeed considerably in the solution of a number of national tasks. Kazakhstan model of Islam's constructive potential application, integration of the divided society on its basis represents doubtless interest not only for the republics of the CIS, but also for other countries of the world. Islam is an integral part of Kazakhstan history and culture, life-style of millions citizens. Islam has the potential of working not for extremists, but on the democratic forces,

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promoting not destabilization, but society and state consolidation.

We believe that the realistic analysis of a modern political situation will be incomplete without taking into account Islamic factor. On the other hand, development of Islam is inseparable from political processes occurring in the country. Thus, it is apparently necessary to investigate religion-society relations, concrete forms of their interaction. In modern realities of Kazakhstan the influence of sociopolitical and legal mechanisms on religion is obvious and it has essentially extended in the conditions of the accelerated transformation of public life. As in 20 years of independence there have been serious changes in Kazakhstan which have introduced the alterations in the main tendencies of Islam development, interethnic and interfaith relationship.

The essence of the abovementioned changes in the state's public life and the changes in historically traditional Islam will be justified in the given article. Its contents and composition are conditioned by the main task with allocation of the separate paragraphs devoted to the most significant, which is mentioned in titles, problems of modern state and religious practice in the Republic of Kazakhstan.

II. RELIGIOUS SITUATION IN KAZAKHSTAN AND QUESTIONS OF POLITICAL AND LEGAL REGULATION

Religious situation in the Republic of Kazakhstan is defined by general sociopolitical and economic situation in the country. Within democratization of society and strengthening of economy the destabilizing potential of a number of alarming tendencies in the religious sphere weakens.

One of the major factors of stable social development is a peaceful interfaith dialogue. Achievement of interfaith peace is an important condition of existence of modern society. Interfaith relations policy in Kazakhstan is held with the account of globalization processes. At the initiative of N.A.Nazarbayev, president of Kazakhstan, Congresses of leaders of world and traditional religions took place in Astana. For the first time in history leaders of world and traditional religions gathered and accepted joint documents. Congresses became an essential contribution to global process of inter-civilizational and intercultural dialogue. The meeting of leaders of world religions became a powerful incentive against attacks on religions and disparaging separate religious doctrines. It was agreed unanimously that the variety of religious beliefs and confessions should lead not to mutual suspicion and discrimination, but to mutual perception and harmony showing uniqueness of various religions and cultures. Successful conduct of forums brought visible political dividends to Kazakhstan, helped to increase its positive image on the international arena. Leaders of world and traditional religions accepted the Declaration in which interfaith dialogue is considered as one of the most important instruments of maintaining peace and consent among peoples and nations, efforts of the international community on dialogue advance between civilizations. "I believe that continuation of interreligious dialogue will become an important contribution to the advance of cultural wealth, cultures of the world, a

consent and tolerance in the new millennium. We can turn our forum not only into the main platform of world interfaith dialogue, but also into a universal tribune of constructive dialogue on topical issues of the present [2].

However to what extent do forums demonstrate the efficiency of Kazakhstan model of interfaith and interethnic consent in the state? First of all, the question is natural: why in the apparently safe country there are branches of various extremist organizations and followers of such doctrines as, "Nurdzhular", «Values of Tabliga», "Bkhagavad-Geeta", the founder of sect "Society of consciousness of Krishna" of Hindu Abkhay Charan, "Witnesses of Jehovah", "Scientology church" and others perform their activity in Kazakhstan?

It is a paradoxical situation when in a rather safe country we can note the activity of practically all terrorist and extremist organizations which have extended their influence on the Central Asian region. Besides, the recent growth of their branches' activity has been noted. The ambiguity of a religious situation in Kazakhstan is justified by the activity of nonconventional Islamic movements, such as «Hizb-at-Tahrir», «at-Takfir va-l-hidzhra», "Tabligi dzhama'at" and others. Also we must emphasize that in the history of these movements there are a lot of «white spots». Judging from the geographical distribution of such organizations in the region, Kazakhstan appears among the least studied territories, their activity. Meanwhile Kazakhstan not only gives the corresponding material for studying methods of their work, but also allows to track the evolution of development typical for the countries of Central Asia, occurring in the definite area and during a rather short period of time [4].

Far from being optimistic is the information about exposure in various areas of Kazakhstan of representatives of terrorist and extremist organizations, detention of their participants. According to data of the Center of anti-terrorist programs, in December, 2006 in the city of Stepnogorsk of Akmolinsky region bodies of KNB liquidated the group «Stepnogorsky Jamaat» in number of 10 people. Its purposes were the implementation of explosive actions in office buildings of the city, and also commission of attacks on bank collectors for getting financial resources [5].

In July, 2006 the staff of Extremism, Separatism and Terrorism Combatting Department of DVD of the Aktyubinsk region detained 7 people on suspicion in participation in group «Tabligi Jamia». 13 more members of this organization were detained by DKNB officers of Mangystausky oblast in September of the same year.

In 2006 two citizens of Kazakhstan were condemned for participation in terrorist activity, as well as participation in war operations in Chechnya (Russia) [6].

In April, 2007 according to Interfax Kazakhstan agency in Zhambylsky region a 22-year-old citizen of Uzbekistan, wanted in his homeland for participation in forbidden extremist organizations was detained. Meanwhile, in December 2005, in Taraz his elder brother was found guilty of terrorist actions and murder and sentenced to 25 years of imprisonment. He was the head of «Zhamaat of Mujahideens of Central Asia» organization [7].

The alarming statistics shows that in Kazakhstan there are favorable conditions for recruiting new members from unsuccessful regions of the country by forbidden organizations. Ascertaining of the events which have occurred during 2011 in various regions of the republic forms some kind of chronicle. Let's allocate some especially indicative facts [8].

In one of housing estates of Almaty fighters of a special group "Sunkar" neutralized a band of radical Islamists.

- 25-year-old Rakhimzhan Makhatov blew himself up in DKNB building in Aktobe. It turned out later that he was a salafit, i.e. the adherent of an Islam branch which followers fight for belief purity [9].

In Shubarsha village of Aktyubinsky region followers of a radical branch of Islam in revenge for detention of their brother in faith fired at a local police station, having killed policemen [10].

On October 31 in Atyrau two explosions thundered at once – near the building of city akimat and near an inhabited high-rise building in "Saryarka" residential district, not far from city prosecutor's office.

In November Kazakhstan was stunned by news about bloody events in Taraz, and in December in the settlement Boralday in Almaty oblast there was a joint operation of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and KNB on detention of criminal group [11].

And thus, along with a fair on the whole statement of the President of the country at an anniversary session of APK (page 2 of this article), it is necessary to admit the right on legitimacy of opinion that the recent religious stability has been destroyed in last years. «Till a certain time our country remained an island of religious stability, kind of a transit and recreation point for revolutionary-Islamic figures» [12]. Interests of organizations forbidden in RK are revealed today in the following directions: expansion of activity area; use of political methods; kindling of international discord; making contacts with criminal structures. And if before the extremist organizations recruited people from the republic, today the geography of obtained skills of the newly turned stretches far out of borders of Central Asian republics [13]. It becomes obvious that in the present situation actions of law enforcement bodies, whatever successful they were, are ineffective, as they don't solve the problem on the whole. The public is mythologized by successfully fulfilled operations on elimination of terrorist and extremist organizations. But instead of one liquidated cell appear two new, which act taking into account the experience of predecessors. At the same time in the course of fight against terrorist and extremist organizations the role of different ministries and departments remains passive [14]. It is clear, that one of the main objectives is the creation of a uniform center, capable to unite efforts of all ministries and republic departments, or revision of functions and tasks of already existing structures. Meanwhile state authorities try to take strict control of activity of nonconventional Islamic movements and groups, having declared, besides, a number of religious organizations beyond the law. The determination is conformable to wide public opinion. According to results of sociological research carried out by Dzhililov Z.G. in 2007, 70 % of respondents supported strengthening of state control over

religious associations, 57 % spoke against distribution of nonconventional forms of Islam in the country [15].

The peculiarity of the religious situation in Kazakhstan is the fact that in public opinion ethnic and confessional origins are identical. It is logical to assume that any complication, especially an aggravation of the interfaith relations will be transferred to the national sphere.

In such a situation it is important to provide a complex of political, economic, social, ideological conditions for development of ethnic cultures, and their interaction in favor of preservation and strengthening of national unity. It is strongly desirable to take drastic measures on preventing political radicalism, confessional and ethnic intolerance, on forming in citizens tolerant consciousness and behavior, on development of political and legal culture, expansion of social partnership, fostering Kazakhstan patriotism, preventing different types of extremism [16].

Improvement of Kazakhstan model of interethnic and interfaith consent is sharply topical and demands immediate and effective measures.

The religious situation in Kazakhstan demands careful consideration from the state as the negative processes occurring in the spiritual sphere of social life are capable to nullify huge efforts of the government directed on overcoming objectively existing in Kazakhstan society contradiction capable to turn Kazakhstan into the arena of struggle of political and national ambitions.

III. TRANSFORMATION OF RELIGIOUS CONSCIOUSNESS IN THE CONDITIONS OF KAZAKHSTAN INDEPENDENCE

Post-Soviet strategy of social and economic development in Kazakhstan and other countries of Central Asia, especially in the first half of the 1990s, didn't find support with the population: as reforms were carried out mainly at the expense of deterioration of its living standards. It is necessary to mention the "contribution" made by unfair officials and newly made "sharks" of business in the course of an impoverishment of people [17]. It is natural that there was a need for search of such a political and ideological form which would serve as protection against the uncontrolled power of officials, moral decomposition of society, unfair distribution of property. And it was natural that in Kazakhstan and other republics of Central Asia with a formed cultural and religious tradition Islam became a shelter from social hardships [18]. It is necessary to emphasize that the Islamic religion was able to answer many questions put by modern reality.

The situation which developed in Kazakhstan not only repeated the one in the East countries, but possessed its own features determined by peculiarities of social, economic and political status of the republic, complex structure of the population that affected the religious atmosphere as a whole and evolution of Islamic religion.

The association of sociologists and political scientists (Almaty, M. Mametova St., 12/21, apt. 36) aimed to find out the religious beliefs of Kazakhstan people. The opinion poll gave quite interesting results [19].

It turned out that more than a half of the interrogated population consider themselves believers.

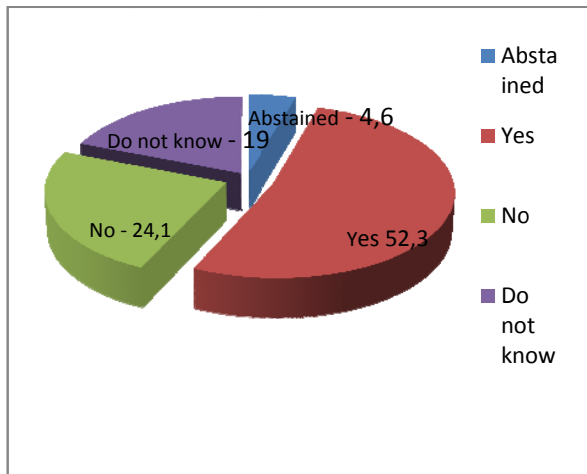


Fig. 1 Percent from number of respondents (4 thousand)

The people's attitude to traditional Islam came to light. 50,3 % among respondents are convinced that religion should develop on par with other spheres; 15 % consider that religion should become a basis for spiritual and moral education; 13,3 % admit religion development only in a limited framework.

It is inevitable to conclude that for every young independent country there is a need to solve an objective task – creation of the optimum model matching the traditional and the modern on both levels – basic and super linear. Modernization is possible only in the conditions of synthesis of traditional with modern which is especially important in the course of integration provoking change and deformation of various components. It is in synthesis, as it seems lies the essence of creating the national state, and the success depends on the ability of country leaders to develop the optimum model of synthesis.

As a result, we will note that the vacuum in the consciousness of many people, formed after crash of communistic ideology, substantially was filled with belief in God. The question is how sincere and deliberate this belief is.

IV. ISLAM AND SOCIETY IN INDEPENDENT KAZAKHSTAN: CONDITION, FEATURES AND DEVELOPMENT TENDENCIES

The Republic of Kazakhstan is a unitary republic, with the strong ethnic cultural substratum, populated by a wide range of nationalities, religious and breeding groups. (Official preliminary data from 2009 census about distribution of the main ethnos were published on February 4, 2010: Kazakhs — 63,1 % of the population, Russian — 23,7 %, Uzbeks — 2,8 %, Ukrainians — 2,1 %, the Uyghur — 1,4 %, Tatars — 1,3 %, Germans — 1,1 %, other ethnos — 4,5 %. [2]) The number of Kazakhs increased during 1999-2009 by 26 % (or on 2,1 million people), Uzbeks — by 23 % (on 87 thousand), the Uyghur — by 6 % (on 13 thousand). The number of Germans sharply reduced by 50 % (on 175 thousand), and also Ukrainians — by 39 % (on 214 thousand), Tatars — by 18 %

(on 46 thousand), Russian — by 15 % (on 683 thousand people)) [20]. A peculiar model of relationship between religion and the state, as an important part of spirituality of the people, as one of the major factors of confessional and cultural identification was formed as a result. After obtaining independence in Kazakhstan there was a rapid growth of dynamism of social and economic, political, spiritual and cultural phenomena. A sign of this tendency is the intensification of processes of national culture and traditional religion revival, increase of religiousness level of the population.

Nowadays in the Republic of Kazakhstan, in the conditions of independence we can observe a considerable socio-economic and political reformation the need of which is dictated by contemporary clamor. Together with transformations in various vital spheres there is a process of reassessment of cultural wealth, a number of conceptual positions in various ideological theories [21]. The process is explainable, for the difficult process of creation of an independent state as a historical phenomenon is characterized by uniqueness and originality. Crucial importance thus lays in the ability of introspection and perception of historical experience and as a result -accuracy of a historical forecast.

Again we will emphasize and confirm that the events occurring in Kazakhstan demonstrate urgency in studying clash-points of Islam and policy, Islam and traditions. And also the urgent need to strengthen national and spiritual unity of the state, its safety. These problems are becoming especially topical now when Kazakhstan becomes more and more religious pluralistic society, when there is a quest for moral values in religious doctrines, methods of neutralization of religion as one of the most dangerous factors of destabilization of society, in the conditions of unanimously growing interest from youths and other social and active groups of the population [22]. The abovementioned perspective requires deep research on the basis of various theories and concepts, complex and interdisciplinary approaches. It motivates to look for answers to a number of questions. What are the true goals of religious movements and trends? What is the influence of radical religious organizations on the religious background in the country? How to use Islamic traditions preventing them from becoming an obstacle for social and political reforms? And at last, how to formulate modern requirements so that they corresponded to conditions of the country and were recognized as necessary?

Public concern about the problem of spiritual guarantees for active electorate in the course of modern social and economic and political shifts, anxiety concerning insufficient correlation of modernization process to spiritual and cultural experience of the people found their reflection in the Message of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan N.A.Nazarbayev to the people of Kazakhstan. In the message it is emphasized that spiritual development is a necessary condition of progress of modern society because the future of Kazakhstan is inseparably linked with revival of national culture, with aspiration of people to save their traditions [23]. And today there is a search of the answer to the question: whether the country will lose its

century-long spiritual historical experience upon modernization and whether it will enter a qualitatively new, universalized period of history internally devastated with external «cosmopolitan luster» [24].

On the whole, opinions of researchers of Islam influence factors on modern Kazakhstan society can be divided into two groups. The first are convinced that it is not necessary to rely strongly on religious traditions and to build social life on principles not concerning religion. Others consider it necessary to adhere to Islamic traditions without which it is impossible to develop spirituality of the people. Both concepts are alike with their simplified approach to a significant problem. The excessive emphasis on elements of religious life as well as denial of their impact on new phenomena fails to understand internal essence of sociopolitical and cultural processes in which traditional values intertwine with the present, creating the peculiar inconsistent picture which cannot always be understood and captured by mind [25]. One thing is clear, it is difficult to understand culture peculiarities as well as the character of modern Kazakhstan society without reference to historical and religious experience.

Basic changes in social, economic and political life in independent Kazakhstan created not only absolutely new social field, but also new conditions, and new possibilities for revival of Islamic religion [26]. Official support of Islam rebirth wasn't the casual phenomenon: Islam is the productive area of a national cultural heritage which also keeps the influence on the population and partly on leaders of social movements, having kept its potential of «national wisdom» [27]. Its functional canons are coordinated with the ideas and concepts put forward by the official leaders of the independent state. The true religion induces believers to good, forbids infliction of harm, and forms an active, negative attitude to religious extremism. Confirmation to this can be found in the Sacred Koran and life of Prophet Mohammed. For example, one of ayats: «We made you a community adhering to the middle». According to revelations of the Prophet: Truly, religion is simplification and don't altercate upon religion, or you will get tired and grow cold to it. Direct people to the right way, pull together and please them [28]. Concern about lifting spirituality of people is harmonious to efforts of the state on preservation and research of a cultural heritage. The principle of the humane, fair relation to people doesn't contradict the policy of strengthening moral values in society. The Islamic postulate of cultural development of relationship between people will be coordinated with harmonization policy in the society of interethnic and interfaith relations. From the birth of Islamic religion it was made a sacred duty for its followers to be carriers of the high humane ideals defined by the Creator, to be heralds of the true culture, the valid freedom and general mercy «The Turkic world was always a link between the people and cultures... Soon the modern Turkic world, uniting and developing, possibly, will be called by researchers as "the Turkic-Islamic world". In due time, it christened outlook and religion of ancestors of Kazakhs with familiarly and funny sounding term: "tyurkizm-oguzizm", now it, seemingly, chose more surely, where its state should move [29]. During independence the authorities and clergy

aspire to coordinate Islamic values to national tradition, to present Islam as an important component in the history of people.

Islam came to Kazakh earth more than twelve centuries ago. Since then the people adhere to a mazhab Hanafi branch. Advantage of commitment to one of mazhabs in Islam is that the people remain a unity, consent, an organization. As a proof serves the fact that in Kazakhstan throughout several centuries there were no conflicts, contentions and hostility on religious ground. The unity in religion doesn't allow emergence of malicious intentions. Support of Islamic religion as spiritual and cultural basis became one of counteraction mechanisms to politicization of Islam, strengthening of political stability in the country [26].

Unfortunately, as a result of a long-term separation from Islamic heritage during the Soviet period Kazakhstan Muslims kept away from their origins, including hanafit. As a result, part of believers lost touch with the past and isn't familiar with great heritage of its ancestors and isn't capable of distinguishing the good from the bad owing to small knowledge of Islam [30]. The agenda of today includes a question of revival of Islam which is traditionally widespread among Muslims of our country.

Authority policy regarding religion should be as follows: without denying its influence on the population to use all values of Islamic civilization and at the same time not to allow religious impact on political processes as it happened in some countries of the Muslim East.

V. CONCLUSION

Problems of historical development of Islam represent a difficult subject for research, and its evolution in the conditions of political transformation in Kazakhstan is even more difficult and inconsistent. And the matter is not only that Islam had to defend itself in new circumstances, but also that starting points of evolution of Islamic religion are extremely various, and "entry" into new realities was tightened for many years and proceeds so far. It is necessary to note the low level of research of a problem of politicization of Islam which is often put down to extreme scarcity of sources and materials on the subject [31]. Islam in Kazakhstan was submitted to very considerable influence of a local spiritual substratum, and also many philosophical doctrines, legal and moral standards, the esthetic views long since developed or occurring in these or those countries and the whole regions of its distribution. Features of social and economic, political and cultural development of people in countries and separate regions promoted formation of a number of directions, movements and trends in Islamic religion. The same circumstances became the reason of emergence of many, sometimes considerable differences on the grounds of one religious trend. Therefore, conclusions of some researchers on "uniform", "pure" Islam can be called into question. We think it to be too daring to believe that "national", "traditional" Islam presents a danger of distribution of radicalism and that it is something alien to "true" Islam [32]. Most likely, traditional Islam is capable of becoming a barrier on a way of spreading of radical religious ideology.

In Kazakhstan Islam started to take firm positions after gaining independence, passed this way by itself, its development has essential features. Islam was exposed to long and strong impact of atheistic propaganda of the Soviet state putting constant pressure upon Muslim clergy, destroying cult constructions and monuments. Naturally, non-standard sociopolitical conditions left the mark on development features of religion in Kazakhstan.

In development tendencies of Islamic religion in Kazakhstan we can see evolution and transformation ways, various combinations of firmness of a tradition and a modernism, the extent of external forces' influence on the provision of religion in new political conditions.

It is necessary to emphasize the following circumstance. Like any other religion Islam developed unevenly. Ascents were replaced by recessions, development of one trend was accompanied by degradation of others, and reformation in one country went parallel with strengthening of positions of fundamentalism. Obviously, preservation of influence and distribution area of religion depends on many reasons, main of which consist in social, economic and sociopolitical conditions of its existence. Undoubtedly, in the countries of the East and specifically in Kazakhstan essential influence on Islam was rendered by transformation of political relations, taking into account their contents and forms. Practically in all countries of the East, including Kazakhstan, sociopolitical conditions act as a stimulator or a regulator of religion development.

To define a place and role of Islamic religion in Kazakhstan, to determine its value it is necessary to analyze social, economic and political background [33]. Meanwhile in literature the status of Islam in Kazakhstan is estimated in a separation from specific conditions of political character within independence. The religious situation is quite often considered unlinked with development of modern society as a whole and change of its forms during changing processes. A number of researchers demonstratively prove the inaccuracy of such methodology. In particular Islam in Kazakhstan as a whole didn't "interfere" with development of independence and didn't "constrain" it, though promoted change of rates, forms and methods of impact on development.

The problem of strengthening of interfaith and international tolerance requires constant attention. Internal political stability and safety, a confident movement of Kazakhstan to the new horizons of development depend on its solution. Consistent policy is conducted in Kazakhstan in this direction; determined efforts are made to strengthen peace and harmony among the people. As a secular state Kazakhstan guarantees counteraction measures against interfaith conflicts. It concerns both internal political decisions, and legislative initiatives which exclude articles and acts implying a priority of this or that religion to the detriment of other faith. Such policy of the President is fully supported by the people of Kazakhstan, believers and other citizens of the country.

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