

RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN KAZAKHSTAN AND UZBEKISTAN IN THE CONTEXT OF REGIONAL SAFETY

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Abstract

The rationale of the research is caused by the fact that definition of the national border between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan is a serious problem due to various reasons. The Central Asian Region acts as a buffer zone protecting the southern frontiers of the CIS and weakening of this section may threaten the stability of the situation. Due to this fact this article is aimed at revealing of the ways of cooperation and strengthening of the relationships between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. In this context exactly the relationships between the states acts as the basis of stability in Central Asia. The paper reveals cooperation in the sphere of foreign policy of the two key republics of Central Asia. The materials of the paper represent practical utility for further development of relationships between Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan as well as for the international relations in Central Asia. It seems to be reasonable for Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, the two largest states in the region, to intensify their joint efforts for implementation of a series of integration projects in Central Asia with the purpose of achievement of stability in two- and multisided relations.

Keywords: national border, relationships between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, safety, integration projects, Central Asia, international relations.

Introduction

Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan built close relationships which is a quite naturally determined process, because their partnership is caused not only by common borders, but also by cultural and historical as well as linguistic community of the two nations. The Central Asian Region is a region of a high strategic importance. First it is connected with its geographical location. Central Asia is the heart of the Eurasian Continent, that's why protection and promotion of security and stability in this region are of the highest importance for the international safety in

general. The events of the last years testify that security threat in this region has been gradually mounting and the safety mechanism is becoming of vital importance.

The Central Asian Region plays the role of a buffer zone protecting southern frontiers of the CIS and weakening of this sector may challenge stability of the situation (Tokayev, 2003).

Speaking about safety in the Central Asian Region it is necessary to focus on the relationships between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan (Tokayev, 2000). In this context exactly the relationships between these countries act as the basis of stability in Central Asia. Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, being located in the center of Eurasia are a link between the developed regions of Europe and South-Eastern Asia. Foreign policy of the two key republics of Central Asia, aspiring to the leading position in the region greatly influences safety and stability of the entire regional system (Zhetpisov, 2007).

Beside that lack of the agreed geopolitical strategy of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan weakens the resistance to the Islamic fundamentalism and extremism.

It is necessary to accept that relationships between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan are rather complicated. There are many unsolved problems between the two states, such as border problems, water resources and migration.

It is not a secret that Uzbekistan claims territory to Kazakhstan. The disputed territory is particularly Saryagash. According to the experts, the same claims may arise towards the cities of Turkestan and Sayram populated by the Uzbeks by 70-80%. There are also disputes over Kirovsky, Makhtaaralsky and Zhetysaysky regions of South Kazakhstan Region, transferred to Uzbekistan in 1956 by initiative of Khrushchev and later returned to Kazakhstan, though not fully. Some experts say consider that among the representatives of the Uzbek elite there are talks that the entire territory of South Kazakhstan Region belongs to Uzbekistan. The issue of the border passing along the Aral Sea also remains unsolved. At the same time there are no territorial claims of Kazakhstan to Uzbekistan. They may potentially arise though, because some Kazakh territories passed to Uzbekistan as early as in 20-30s. The problem is worsened by the fact that after dissolution of the USSR there was no border delimitation and the borders set as early as in the Soviet period did not reflect the peculiarities of the historical diffusion of the ethnic groups within the territory of the region. It caused potential threat of ethnic conflicts (Rakhimov, 2016).

Currently the population of Uzbekistan is about 25.2 mln people. At that the density of the population exceeds 470 people per 1 square kilometer in comparison with Kazakhstan, where density of population is 6 people per 1 square kilometer. Annually the population of Uzbekistan increases by 500 thousand people. Consequently, one may observe migration of people from Uzbekistan to Kazakhstan (Zhetpisov, 2007).

Kazakhstan in its turn strives to secure its territory from influx of unsanctioned migrants. However, the plan of interaction in this sphere has not been yet elaborated.

Methodology

The main methodological principle being the base of the research was the principle of historicism understood as the demand to consider any historical phenomenon in its formation, development and interconnection with the other events and phenomena which they were accompanied by in regard to a certain experience.

The author based upon the principles of omnitude and systemacity, application of which implied usage and critical upheaval of all the complex of the available data. At processing of the empirical data such general scientific research methods were used as synthesis and analysis, historical and logical description, scientific generalization as well as the following special methods: problematic/chronological and comparative/historical.

As it was already said above, the Central Asia Region is strategically important both for the CIS and for the whole world. That's why all these years after the USSR dissolution one can observe competition between Russia, China and the USA (Zerkalov, 2009).

The Summit in Tashkent held in 2015 with participation of the Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev again confirmed the fact that the Uzbekistan government is interested in further development of the bilateral relations. The most important result of the visit was creation of the interstate council with the purpose of development of economic and political contacts and relations in the sphere of security. N. Nazarbayev also called upon expansion of contacts in 'military and technical spheres'. 'Our national security services and special departments should work in the atmosphere of implicit confidence in order to fights against terrorism, drug traffic and other extremists' manifestations in our region,' – he added.

At this summit two leaders showed their aspiration to achievement of stability in Central Asia. That's why speaking about further development of relationships between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, one may state that despite all the problems existing at the current stage, the both parties will do their best to solve them (Zerkalov, 2009).

Results

Delimitation and Demarcation of Borders between Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan

As known, the main attribute of any state is its territory. Central Asia is the region where representatives of various nationalities reside, united by common historical roots. But today former Soviet Union Republics have to solve their common problem which is delimitation and demarcation of their state borders (Jonboboev et al., 2014).

The borders are the barrier for irregular migration, drugs and arms traffic. The latter are a serious threat not only for one state, but also for the world community in the time of globalization (Idrisov, 2000). The issues of the borders delimitation have always been challenging in the entire complex of the interstate relations. This issue has been on the agenda since the states gained political independence and were recognized by the world community as de-jure and de-facto separate states and full participants of the world political developments (Lalonde, 2002).

Administrative border between Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan is over 2200 kilometers long, and the decision in definition of its borderline was based on generally accepted international principles including 'uti possidetis' principle (Shaw, 2010), which is concluded in reserving the original borderlines in the process of legal succession and implies that the existing problems will be solved later through the mechanisms of peaceful interstate negotiations (Shaw, 1997).

The procedure of delimitation of state border between Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan was implemented in two steps. At the first stage delimitation of 96% of the total length of the borderline was implemented. The corresponding agreement was signed up by the presidents of the two states on 16 November 2001 in Astana (Rakhimov, 2016). The issues regarding some borderline sections of about 4% from the total length remained to be resolved. As a result of the further contacts in 2002 the interstate negotiations were completed regarding the borderline at these sections, exactly: in the areas of Bagys and Turkestanets settlements, Arnasay Dam etc. (Saparbayev, 2002). In September 2002 in Astana presidents of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan signed up agreement 'On Separate Sections of the Borderline between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan'. However, the Agreement on Delimitation dated 2002 did not regulate the destiny of all the near-border settlements, but just solved the problem of belonging of some disputed territories. In early 2003 governments of Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan elaborated the borderline by mutual agreement. As a result, Uzbekistan received a section of territory bordering on Bagys and Turkestanets settlements and located to the north-east from Tashkent, while Kazakhstan

received Bagys Village and the necks of land between Chardara Water Reservoir and Arnasay Lake. Thus, the Kazakhstan 'enclave' became directly connected by transport with the rest of the Kazakh territory (Rakhimov, 2016).

In 2003 Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan started the process of demarcation of the border. The issue went to the front burner due to the fact that lack of border marking caused borderline incidents mostly connected with the violation by the near-border region inhabitants of the border crossing rules. And it resulted in the cases of shooting and even fatalities (Laumulin, 2005).

Significant growth of the transit index of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan is expected due to release of a series of new international communication projects which will connect Central Asia with other regions (Seydin, 2002).

Leadership in Central Asia

The statement about so-called rivalry between Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan for leadership in Central Asia (CA) has spread rather widely and thus remarkably deformed the views of the real situation and the nature of relationships between the regional states. This false stereotype has influenced both the political positions and scientific approaches towards study of complicated processes in CA. Introduction of this statement into the intense circulation has even led to the fact that the people in the both countries have believed in it so much, that the attributes of rivalry have appeared in those spheres where they were absent and could not be.

It causes senselessness. Even judging about leadership of one or another state it is important to comparatively analyze certain foreign policy actions of the both states and the effectiveness of these actions.

Uzbekistan is a unique state of the Central Asia Region. It is the only republic bordering on all the rest of the Central Asian states (Laumulin, 1994).

While Kazakh multi-vector nature conceals balancing between various geopolitical centers of powers influencing Central Asia. Alongside with that one may observe the other side of the multi-vector nature – Kazakhstan's enthusiasm in big, but inadequate initiatives such as 'Council on Interaction and Measures of Confidence in Asia'. This forum beginning from the senselessness of its name and ending with certain practical actions is doomed to remain the example of multi-vector foreign policy daydreaming. The same fate was shared by the idea of Nursultan Nazarbayev about creation of the Eurasian Union.

One cannot miss in this context famous Nazarbayev's initiative about creation of the Central Asian Union. Thanks to this idea Kazakhstan really had a chance to become the leader in CA. However, this Nazarbayev's idea having become a part of the multi-vector nature was drowned in it instead of becoming the priority and the main direction of the RK foreign policy. Kazakhstan did not notice that Central Asia, Eurasia and Asia are not equal concepts. Foreign policy of Kazakhstan has always been characterized by some eclecticism. Uzbekistan has also distinguished itself by its achievements. Having declared the concept of 'Turkestan our common home' and initially acting as the harbinger of the Central Asian Union, Uzbekistan has little done for it in practice. On the contrary, it mined some sections of its border with Kyrgyzstan and Tadzhikistan, imposed visa regime towards its neighbors (except for Kazakhstan), and was not able to reach a consensus with them as a leader regarding the issue of water resources in the region.

Economic Relations

By now Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan have accumulated a serious base of agreements in their relationships. Particularly, they signed up over 170 bilateral documents in various spheres of cooperation. The main documents are the Agreement on Everlasting Friendship between the

Republic of Uzbekistan and the Republic of Kazakhstan (1998) and the Agreement on Strategic Partnership (2013).

The Agreement on Strategic Partnership between the Republic of Uzbekistan and the Republic of Kazakhstan was signed up by the state leaders during the visit of President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev in June 2013 (Rakhimov, 2016). It contains the main principles and prioritized directions in political, trade economic, transport and communication, water-power, environmental, cultural and humanitarian, military and technical and other spheres of bilateral cooperation. During the visit they also signed up the documents on cooperation between the ministries of internal affairs and customs services of the two states. The Ministry of Culture and Sport of the Republic of Uzbekistan and the Ministry of Culture and Information of the Republic of Kazakhstan adopted the Program of Cooperation in the sphere of culture over the period of 2013–2015. Besides, the presidents participated in the opening of the new building of the Kazakhstan Embassy in Tashkent and the memorial devoted to the great Kazakh poet and thinker Abai Qunanbaiuli (Nazarbayev, 1998).

Notably, trade economic relations between Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan over the period of 1990s – mid-2000s due to a series of objective and subjective reasons were at a comparatively low level. The situation began changing in April 2008 during the visit of President of Uzbekistan to Astana. Islam Karimov and Nursultan Nazarbayev signed up the Agreement on Creation of Free Trade Zone between Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, and later on the volume of foreign trade turnover between the states significantly increased (Nazarbayev, 2012). In 2012 it was equal to more than 2.5 bln USD, provided that export from Kazakhstan to Uzbekistan was equal to 1,344 bln USD, while import from Uzbekistan to Kazakhstan amounted for 817 bln USD. In 2015 the turnover between the states exceeded 3.2 bln USD. And this is certainly not the limit. There are great opportunities for expansion of economic relations. For example, Uzbekistan have significant reserves of export to Kazakhstan of cars and trucks, buses, farm machinery, finished textile, products of electro technical and consumer goods industry, construction materials, glass etc. (Kozhamzharova, 2010). For its part, Kazakhstan can broaden the range of products supplied to Uzbekistan, including rolled metal products, ferroalloys, timber and wood materials.

In the conditions of globalization, it became possible to easily compare the lives of different ethnoses and states including neighbors. However, for political elites fight for resources has always been immanently connected with the fight for gaining and retention of political power. And in the conditions of Central Asia it was at the same time the fight of political elites for property and economic benefits.

Speaking about the sphere of water resources, various forums and meetings are held, promising agreements and pathetic declarations are being adopted. For example, on 18 February 1992 in Alma-Ata the states signed up the Agreement on Cooperation in the sphere of joint management of usage and protection of the interstate water resources. In 2003 the Fund for Saving the Aral Sea was created in Kyzylorda.

In Central Asia there are namely two groups of states. The first one includes Kirgizia and Tadzhikistan, the second – Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. The first group of states does not have any significant resources of raw hydrocarbons, which is a significant share of the export income of Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan. While Kirgizia and Tadzhikistan ‘acquire’ the river heads of Central Asia, and are highly concerned about development of their own hydro energetics. But the second group, especially Uzbekistan is interested in big water volumes mainly for provision of their own farm economy. Because the states of the lowlands — Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan – face an acute problem of desertification. For example, even in Kazakhstan — the most favorable among the listed states, there are over 66

percent of territories are touched by the process of desertification. Some scientists even state that it is exactly Kazakhstan that takes the first position in the world in soil degradation states rating.

In connection with the predicted decrease of the river flow resources significant changes may take place in Kazakhstan regarding the volumes and structures of water consumption, which may cause escalation of conflicts and contradictions between separate water consumers including growing animosity regarding interstate water resources in transboundary basins.

Discussion

Role of Regional Unions in Provision of Security

The projects of such states as Russia, the USA and China are aimed at formation of the security system in Central Asia.

The issues of security are basic for such organizations acting upon the post-Soviet territory as the Commonwealth of Independent States, Collective Security Treaty Organization and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. These unions for Moscow are the mechanism of coordination and cooperation in implementation of jointly taken made decisions and despite the fact that formally these organizations follow different goals, their functions often coincide in practice. Remarkably, the managerial bodies of the organizations are also alike. It seems that division of 'the responsibility zones' between CSTO, CIS and SCO contribute to more effective solution of the security problems in Central Asia (Jonboboev, Rakhimov, Seidelmann, 2014).

Speaking about certain projects in the sphere of security developed in the context of organization it is noteworthy that they are also often duplicated in other formats. For example, in CIS there are three projects of security provision in Central Asia: unified system of air defense, peace-making activities and Anti-terrorism Center of CIS. Meanwhile the Regional Anti-terrorism Structure was also created in SCO, and unified air defense system operates in the framework of the CSTO. This circumstance allows concluding that the functions of CIS in the sphere of security provision are partially transferred to other organizations. And despite the fact that the projects being already implemented under the aegis of CIS will not be wind down, the solution of the security issues in the Central Asia Region will seemingly be transferred to CSTO and SCO (Aubakirova, 2005).

The SCO reflects the security strategy in Central Asia of not only Russia, but also of China. This is exactly what the reason of internal contradictions existing in SCO became. Initially the organization was aimed at fighting with 'three evils': separatism, extremism and terrorism (Kushkumbayev, 2002). Gradually these problems were put on the back burner in the majority of states of Central Asia. The common for all the members of the 'Shanghai Five' remains only the problem of religious extremism. However, the organization rapidly responds even to the new security challenges and shows readiness to take responsibility both for security provision in Central Asia, and for general development of the region (Olimov, 2005).

Particularly, SCO develops the project of creation of the Energy Club which should become a part of the security system in the territory of Central Asia (Logvinov, 2002).

Compared to SCO, functioning both as economic and military-political organization, the CSTO is a peculiar institution of security responsible for both traditional and new threats and challenges in Central Asia. Besides solution of the borderline problems and prevention of foreign policy threats, CSTO solves such important problems as fight against drug traffic.

The USA, for which Central Asia is a strategically important region, is also interested in the reserving stability in its territory. The security strategy of the USA in Central Asia became accommodation of the NATO military forces in the territory of the Central Asian states after 11 September 2001. As Central Asia is the node of geopolitical interests of the USA, Russia

and China, these states are aware of the destabilization threat of the situation in the region and though separately but they take steps towards the solution of the security problem in Central Asia (Ashimbayev, 2005).

The Customs Union and the Eurasian Economic Union

In order to expand the trade economic relationships between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, these state created the Interstate Commission for Bilateral Cooperation operating under the chairmanship of the Principal Deputy Chief Monitor of the RK and RU governments.

In 2015 the turnover between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan is equal to 1.67 bln USD (export – 942.2 bln USD, import – 725.6 bln USD).

The largest export items from Kazakhstan to Uzbekistan are oil and oil processing products, products of flour-and-cereals industry, cereals, black and nonferrous metals, products of inorganic chemistry, food commodities (Kulshmanov, 2016). From Uzbekistan to Kazakhstan they are energy sources (gas), cotton fiber, chemicals and plastics, fertilizers, fruit and vegetable products and other kinds of goods. In Uzbekistan the representative offices of ‘Bank razvitiya Kazakhstana’, AO, ‘Қазақстан темір жолы’, AONK, ‘Kazinform’ and ‘AirAstana’ airlines are credentialed.

Kazakhstan keeps on considering Eurasian integration as a gradual, multiphase process embracing more tight economic integration at reserving the sovereignty and political independence; creation of friendly and open market for people, goods and capital on the basis of economic argumentation rather than political priorities.

The relationships between the EEU and Uzbekistan are complicated, but not ambiguous. Up to the late 2014 the Uzbek government repeatedly underlined that the state would not join any integration organizations resembling the Soviet Union. Besides, Uzbekistan has its own model of development, called by many experts ‘inside-oriented’. Besides, Uzbekistan has not play an active part in any regional organizations since the moment of the USSR dissolution. It often accepted ‘wait and observe’ attitude and considered multiple attempts of (re)integration in the post-Soviet territory extra-careful. In December 2014 President Putin declared that Moscow and Tashkent began consulting on introduction of the agreement on free trade between the EEU and Uzbekistan. On 12 January 2015 President Karimov made it clear that Uzbekistan would not join the EEU. The reason of it is the political nature of the EEU perceived by Uzbekistan, while Uzbekistan prefers implementing multi-vector policy.

Conclusions

Thus, it should be stated that despite all the challenges currently arising in the relationships between Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan in the process of their search of ways for strengthening their statehoods, the policy of the two states towards each other is significantly defined by objective need for joint actions and cooperation at solving topical issues of provision of security, economic cooperation, humanitarian and ecological problems etc.

Development of interaction between Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan is one of the most important aspects of international relations in Central Asia. The existing complex of the modern challenges threatening national, regional and international safety in CA requires expansion and development of all the specters of the relationships between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, including, except for fruitful political and economic cooperation also rich cultural and humanitarian component as well as creative and academic connections. Common interests and goals of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan outweigh any existing disputes and tactical divergence. Objective mutual dependency on each other will allow them to develop mutually beneficial cooperation in future.

It seems to be reasonable for Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, the two largest states in the region, to intensify their joint efforts for implementation of a series of integration projects in Central Asia with the purpose of achievement of stability in two- and multisided relations – the same way as Germany and France implemented it in the middle of the 20th century – at dawn of movement towards the European integration.

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