

УДК 327

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KAZAKHSTAN: THE LAND OF CREATIVE GLOBAL INITIATIVES

Аннотация

В статье отмечается, что за 22 года своего существования в качестве независимого государства Казахстан выдвинул ряд крупнейших глобальных инициатив, которые принесли пользу мировому сообществу в целом и исламскому миру, важной частью которого является Казахстан, в частности. Они также внесли значительный положительный вклад в безопасность, стабильность, мир и развитие на мировом и региональном уровнях. Как следствие этих инициатив народ Казахстана стал еще больше гордиться своей Родиной. И что более важно, будущие проекты не только принесут пользу сообществу наций, но и дадут казахстанцам возможность почувствовать успех, гордость и уверенность.

Ключевые слова: Казахстан, Организация исламского сотрудничества (ОИС), Совецание по взаимодействию и мерам доверия в Азии (СВМДА).

Аңдатпа

Мақалада тәуелсіздік алған 22 жыл ішіндегі Қазақстанның жаһандану заманындағы әлемдік қауымдастық пен ислам дүниесіне қосылған маңызды үлес көлемінде бағаланатын ірі жетістіктері сөз болады. Қазақстанның ғаламдық және өңірлік деңгейдегі өзіндік үлесі қауіпсіздік, тұрақтылық пен татулық ұстанымдарын дамытар мүмкіндіктерімен өлшенеді, сондықтан мақалада Қазақстан халқын да осы аталған өзекті жобалардың арқасында мақтаныш сезімі билейтіні сөзсіз деп аталып көрсетілген.

Тірек сөздер: Қазақстан, Ислам ынтымақтастық ұйымы (ИЫҰ), Азиядағы өзара әрекеттестік пен сенім шаралары бойынша кеңес.

Abstract

In article it may be concluded that during past 22 years of its existence as an independent republic, Kazakhstan has taken some major global initiatives that have proved to be positive for the world community in general, and for the Islamic world of which Kazakhstan is an important member, in particular. These have also contributed to global and regional security, peace, stability and development in a noticeably positive way. The pride of Kazakh people has also been enhanced as a result of these initiatives. More importantly, what is planned for future will not only be beneficial for the community of nations but all instill a heightened sense of accomplishment, pride and confidence among the Kazakh people.

Key words: Kazakhstan, Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA), the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC).

1. Introduction

Since the independence of the country in 1991, Republic of Kazakhstan has taken a number of major initiatives with far-reaching global significance and relevance as well as visible positive impact. Most of these initiatives have been brainchildren of Kazakh president Nursultan Nazarbayev and have been acclaimed, world over. Start from the idea of Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA) put forth by Kazakh leader in UN General Assembly session of 1992, steps for nuclear non-proliferation, bringing the religious leaders of the world together, promoting regional integration, creating a capital that can serve as another global center, leadership role in organizations such as OSCE, SCO and OIC are just some of the examples. Some of these initiatives are such that on which a plethora of literature has already been produced; yet there are some others whose various aspect have been covered in the prevailing discourse but a lot remains to be deliberated upon some of their dynamics.

Nonetheless, what is more notable is that "continuity of creative initiatives" has been ensured by the present founding Kazakh leader. One may find various reasons to look at these initiatives positively as well as other wise; but the continuity with which some important domestic, regional and global initiatives have been unfolding from Kazakhstan, indeed makes Kazakhstan "land of global initiatives." Similarly, there may be many angles to look upon such initiatives and of course, several reasons to point out shortcomings in and discuss flaws in such initiatives. However, this paper discusses, in detail, the positive impacts of a select few of the major global and regional initiatives emanating from Kazakhstan, in a thematic setting. Section 2 discusses Kazakhstan as a

crisis manager and preventer, focusing on the services rendered by the country from the platforms of OSCE and CICA. Section 3 is dedicated to Kazakhstan's emerging position as a leader within the Islamic world. Section 4, briefly talks about the futuristic initiatives taken by the country and its leadership while section 5 concludes this article.

2. Kazakhstan as crisis manager and preventer

A major role that Kazakhstan has assumed over past two decades, and particularly in previous few years, is that of a conflict manager in the Eurasian region, and the on the continent of Asia. As chair of the all important Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), Astana actually put a new life in the organization that had by that time (pre 2010 decade) has become a dormant entity. And even before that, since 1990s the country has established a foundation for a security paradigm in the continent of Asia in the shape of Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA). This section throws light on the achievements of Kazakh presidency of OSCE, and evolution of CICA so far.

2.1. OSCE chair and Kazakhstan as source of regional stability

The OSCE is the world's largest regional security organization whose 56 participating States span the geographical area from Vancouver to Vladivostok. The Chairmanship rotates annually. It was in 2010 that Kazakhstan got this prestigious position, while the country was part of chairing troika in 2009 and 2011 as well.

It needs no mention that Kazakhstan possesses a key and very vast area of Eurasia. This state is important not only because of its unique geography but also because of the natural resources. The country is a unique place where cultures of the East and the West meet. The state claims to be Eurasian and, indeed, the balance of the Asian and European features are represented in Kazakhstan's policy. Kazakhstan's philosophy is that it wants to have the smoothing balance from both continents, Asia and Europe, because this will have a positive impact on economic development and social well-being, not only on the Eurasian subcontinent, but in the long run, in the whole post-crisis world as well.

Despite the ethnic conflicts that have erupted in many former Soviet satellite countries and Soviet republics in the aftermath of the breakup of the Soviet system, Kazakhstan has preserved its stability; because of this, it was elected to the term presidency of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) for the year 2010 despite opposition from various corners. For the first time, a former Soviet republic that is also a predominantly Muslim country, thus, served as term president of this organization. This is a prestigious project for this state

It was challenging for Kazakhstan to fulfill OSCE mandates, which included early warning, conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation. No doubt that OSCE itself is sometimes unable to achieve tangible results, as it is a consultative body and, unlike the UN, it has not real means of responding to such situations (deployment of military contingents, imposition of sanctions). Moreover, all decisions at the OSCE are made on a consensus basis, and such an approach considerably complicates a speedy resolution of conflict situations.

Yet, it would not be wrong to state that Kazakh chairmanship of OSCE was resounding success. With no doubts, the honor of the chairmanship in the authoritative international organizations symbolized the success of social, economic and political achievements of Kazakhstan after independence. Besides, Kazakhstan's Chairmanship translated into important opportunities both for Astana and OSCE.

During its chairpersonship, Kazakhstan's main focus was on the "Kyrgyz issue". Kyrgyzstan's president Kurman Bakiyev was expelled from his post in April 2010. It was economic inconsistency and ethnic tension that led to the upheaval in Kyrgyzstan. This further escalated in June 2010. Kazakhstan also promised to give humanitarian aid to this.

Geographically Kazakhstan is very important (although it is a land locked state but near to Europe) East and West look after this country. The primary goal of Kazakhstan's program of 'road to Europe'

was to shift the relations between Kazakhstan and EU countries to the level of strategic partnership in the political, economic and social fields.

Kazakh chairmanship of OSCE resulted in the first-in-a-decade summit of the organization's leaders, in Astana in December 2010, which despite lack of complete consensus was a major global initiative that laid the foundations for several frameworks to start operating for peace and development encompassing the organization's membership. Very pertinent to point out here was the focus on the situation in Afghanistan in the OSCE summit 2010.

2.2. CICA: Towards a New Paradigm for Asian Security

It is well known that with the rise of Asian nations such as China and other 'tigers', the center of global economic and political power is shifting from the West to the East. It would not be wrong to say that the shift has actually occurred, to a large extent. It goes without saying that 21st century is Asian Century.

At the same time, however, a new and heightened geo-economic and geo-political struggle between the existing and emerging centers of global power has ensued in this continent, making this part of the world a focus of unmatched attention and a subject of continued strategic discourse.

The continent, the largest in the world covering land mass from the Far East to the Near East and from Siberia to Indian Oceans and in between, is a highly conflict-ridden and conflict-prone region. Besides, new alignments, developments and overtures have been witnessed in the recent past, not all of them very positive.

Some of the incidents and developments such as US-India strategic partnership, Sino-Japanese row over East China Sea islands, the emerging tussle in the South China Sea, the US' announcement to focus more on Asia Pacific region as a 'pivot', once again highlight the need for a proper architecture for continental security and stability. Some sub-regional groupings exist but these either are limited to one part of the continent such as ASEAN or do not take up political issues at all, as is the case with SAARC. No organization exists to work entirely for the continental affairs.

It is, nonetheless, encouraging to note that some fora already exist that can be developed further to start the desired journey towards a peaceful and stable continent. One such forum is Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures (CICA). During last twenty years of its existence, CICA has grown into a very significant forum of multidimensional interaction among the leaders, high ups and other relevant stakeholders of the countries of Asian continent. While the ideas shared from the forum of CICA are yet to see any tangible results, nonetheless the contributions of the organization are unique as it is credited with initiating a highly commendable process, even between arch rivals like Pakistan and India. The idea of CICA was first brought forth by Nursultan Nazarbayev, president of Kazakhstan, exactly two decades ago in October 1992, from the platform of the UN General Assembly.

More than twenty years down the road, CICA has evolved into a permanent forum for dialogue, interaction and CBMs in the spheres of political & military affairs, economic cooperation as well as in the arena of non-traditional threats. The forum, working on the basis of consensus, has developed a comprehensive catalogue of CBMs. Considering the work already done by the forum, it would not be wrong to assert that it would be beneficial for the continent to build upon this idea to enhance and expand the spirit and its ideals.

It may be pointed out here that since 2010, Turkey is holding the chairmanship of the forum that will continue up to 2014 (meaning two terms of two years each) and now China has applied to assume chairmanship from 2014 to 2016. During the Turkish chairmanship, the work of the forum has further solidified.

The widespread issues that the continent of Asia finds itself confronted with – and which encompass the dimensions of the work of CICA – establish a quite visible need for sustainability and continuity of such an initiative. It is high time that the idea proposal of transforming CICA into a full-

fledged organization, forwarded once again by Kazakh president should be given due consideration among the leadership and in the capitals of all the member countries, and efforts should be initiated towards the realization of this idea.

Such a move, in years ahead, will result in the following benefits. Firstly, the continuity – and not saturation – of a worthwhile pan-continental initiative, which often happens with such initiatives if not sustained properly.

Establishing of a full-fledged organization would provide the continent, its people and leadership, with the possibility of coming up with and working in the framework of a whole new paradigm for Asian security, based on mutual consultation, participation, and transparency. The need for such an alternative paradigm becomes imminent considering that the traditional security paradigm of the continent in particular and the world at large is visibly not just and equitable – and thus, resultantly, non-transparent to an overwhelmingly large extent.

CICA's further development will provide the platform for initiation of regional initiatives for regional problems; meaning that not the continuity of and dependence upon the initiatives, rather interference, of extra-regional forces. It will also provide a chance for sharing the benefits of prosperity in one part of the continent, with others, which are lagging behind and need support and cooperation from others.

Last but not the least, such a step will provide a permanent forum for eradicating the emerging and non-traditional threats, which are now indeed an apparent and established challenge for the countries of the region.

Thus, realizing that good and innovative ideas can emerge in any part of the world and are not by any means limited to the developed North, the idea and ideals of CICA need to be fully supported, by all the member countries, and observers.

3. Kazakhstan: emergence as a new leader within OIC members

In recent years, there have been a few major steps taken by Kazakhstan that portray the country as an emerging leader within the Islamic world. The country also assumed the rotating yearly Chairmanship of Council of Foreign Ministers (CFM) of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). This opportunity not only brought OIC and CARs closer, but also forwarded the Central Asia's regional agenda at the center of OIC's focus for intra Islamic world cooperation. The other major initiative was the proposal for setting up OIC Food Security Fund. Earlier, specific legislative and administrative decisions had already started developing Almaty as regional center of Islamic modes of financing. This section discusses these three initiatives.

3.1. Kazakh chairmanship of OIC Council of Foreign Ministers

OIC members are well aware and share also that when Kazakhstan took on the chairmanship in June 2011, it was challenging moment after the events of the "Arab Awakening". During Kazakh tenure as chairman of Council of Foreign Minister (CFM), a total of 40 events, including 10 at the ministerial level were held. Major among them included:

- 7th World Islamic Economic Forum,
- Third Conference of the Ministers of Health of the OIC,
- Fifth meeting of the Ministers of the Environment
- \$500 million in humanitarian aid to Somalia was also collected (that was recognized as the biggest such move)
- New institution within the of Organization – OIC Office on Food Security in Astana
- Development of G-Global
- Decision to establish an independent permanent commission of OIC on Human Rights.
- The Muslim community initiative in the field of nuclear non-proliferation.

As was put forth in the resolutions of the 39th session of OIC CFM in Djibouti in 2012, OIC members realized and expressed it that Astana has taken number of steps for internal reform of OIC; tried to expand its collaboration with the organizations like EU, OSCE, SCO, and CICA and with the Forum of world and traditional religions.

At the same time, strong emphasis has been laid on formulating and implementing the OIC Special Program for Central Asia, Afghanistan was made an area of priority focus. Media reports and interactions with experts also suggest that Kazakhstan is devoting significant resources to redeveloping agriculture to improve the economy and reduce unemployment in the region.

While there is also a feeling that more should have been achieved; it is understood well by OIC members that considering one year period is not very long for a result-oriented functioning of such a large inter-governmental organization, Kazakh initiatives should be taken as steps in the right direction – that can be built upon further by successive chairing countries and OIC secretariat.

3.2. OIC Food Security Fund and Center

The 39th CFM meeting in Djibouti also supported the establishment of OC Institution for Food Security in Astana, and asked upon Secretary General to convene meeting(s) of experts to discuss and decide the issues in this regard. So, the move has been made. Even if there are some objections among the members countries regarding this institution, these will be discussed in such meetings and will be sorted out. The fruits of the foreseen institution now seem to be a reality, in not so distant future.

3.3. The emerging regional center of Islamic finance

While Islamic modes of financing are developing all around the world, some of the countries are making special efforts to tap the huge potential they present. Republic of Kazakhstan has become the first state in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and Central Asia region introducing specific legislation for introduction and development of Islamic finance.

The result of this policy was the opening in March 2010 of the first Islamic bank in the country – Al Hilal. In addition, the country is introducing amendments to its legislation in order to access the financial market of Islamic bonds – known as Sukuk. These measures are expected not only increase investment from the Islamic world, but also are aimed at establishing Almaty – Kazakhstan's commercial capital – as a regional center for Islamic finance.

Development of Islamic finance in Kazakhstan was one of the main themes and at the 7th World Islamic Economic Forum (WISF), held in Astana, from 7 to 9 June 2011. WISF is an associate event of the OIC and plays an important role in shaping the pool of investors from Islamic countries, members of the OIC.

The period beyond Kazakhstan's chairmanship of the OIC CFM, due to the linkages built during this period, is expected to attract to it additional investments from Islamic countries in the Common Economic Space (CES). Kazakhstan has a Customs Union with Russia and Belarus. Accordingly, it will be a direct effect for the entire single economic space. And in this respect not only of the OIC, but European countries expect a close approximation of the economies of East and West, and expect to get a powerful economic effect of the mutually beneficial cooperation.

Several events have also been held in the country in recent months to promote the awareness of Islamic finance, and financial products being marketed on Islamic principles have attracted huge number of people's attention. It was clear indication of the potential that exists, and it is expected to be realized in days ahead.

4. Initiatives for Future

While discussing the continuity of initiatives emerging from the Kazakh land, the discussion will remain incomplete if one does not mention some of the initiatives that are already decided for the future years. This subsection takes into account, briefly, two such initiatives of the future namely the Astana Expo 2017 and "Kaz Aid".

4.1. Expo 2017, Astana

After stiff competition, the Kazakh bid for holding of Expo 2017 has recently been accepted and the capital city Astana has been awarded the right to hold this mega global issue, focusing on the

theme of Future Energies. Based on the track record of the country in holding such major events, one can hope that the event – four years from here – will make a mark. At one had it will showcase that what the energy futures of the planet actually are and what the world in general and Kazakhstan to offer in this connection, while on the other hand it will be an opportunity for confluence of cultures and civilizations.

4.2. Kaz Aid

The world is very familiar with names of development aid institutions such as USAID, UNAIDS and AusAid. It will not be very long when another similar institution – named “Kaz Aid” – will be emerging on the horizon. Kazakh government has taken a decision in principle already to launch an official development arm, to help the countries and societies with a specially created fund. The government is discussing the planned agency’s budget, its focus areas, possible methods of fund allocation and prospective recipients (such as NGOs and governments). Government approval is expected this year. While at one hand it will add to the global efforts to enhance the quality of life and on the other hand will provide an opportunity for the Kazakh nation to increase its global outreach.

5. Conclusion

It may be concluded that during past 22 years of its existence as an independent republic, Kazakhstan has taken some major global initiatives that have proved to be positive for the world community in general, and for the Islamic world of which Kazakhstan is an important member, in particular. These have also contributed to global and regional security, peace, stability and development in a noticeably positive way. The pride of Kazakh people has also been enhanced as a result of these initiatives. More importantly, what is planned for future will not only be beneficial for the community of nations but all instill a heightened sense of accomplishment, pride and confidence among the Kazakh people.

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