

# Kazakhstan's Middle Power Response to Terrorism

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*ABSTRACT* Most studies define states as small, middle, or great in relation to the power of other states. However, how the capabilities of a particular category of state allow it to respond to challenges from armed non-state actors, has rarely been studied. This article focuses on the Republic of Kazakhstan to give empirical evidence of what patterned course of action middle states undertake to oppose terrorism. In addition, it explores the most prominent causes of Kazakhstan's failure in the fight against armed non-state actors.

## Introduction

Currently, the increased role of armed non-state actors (ANSAs) in international relations and their influence on the world political processes is obvious, being recognized virtually by all observers and researchers.<sup>1</sup> Since the end of the last century the issue of relations between states and ANSAs was the subject of extensive research and had spawned a lively theoretical discussion,<sup>2</sup> the importance of which goes far beyond the academic framework.

Since 2000, in his Addresses to the Nation, Kazakhstan's President Nursultan Nazarbayev has been focusing on the challenges wrought by the transnational flows of financial transactions, trade, information, and diverse migration, whose volume and turbulence have surged beyond the ability of governments to manage them. One negative effect of these flows, is transnational terrorism, which pools together not only in underdeveloped countries with unstable political regimes,<sup>3</sup> but tends to recruit adherents from anywhere in the world. Thus, a massive invasion of non-state actors in world politics is undoubtedly an important phenomenon, transforming the state system in both quantitative and qualitative terms.

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## **The country appears to have overcome the peak of attacks, though still experiencing some displays of radicalization, it makes one wonder how Kazakhstan with functional but fledging institutions of a middle state is managing to respond to challenges from ANSAs**

Kazakhstan, due to its geopolitical position and permanent changes in international politics, is particularly vulnerable to the threats from the ANSAs. Every year, extremist and terrorist activities are becoming more organized and new recruits are being attracted to such groups under the influence of certain internal and external forces (see Table 1). This can be evidenced by the detention of 70 foreigners in the last five years who were involved in the activities of international extremist or terrorist organizations in Kazakhstan.<sup>4</sup>

As a result of the subversive activities of ANSAs, Kazakhstan experienced acts of terrorism in the western and southern parts of its territory. During 2011-2012, 12 violent actions were committed. According to statistics from 2008 to 2013, the number of people convicted of terrorist crimes increased from 27 to 171, and for extremist crimes –from 56 to 168 persons.<sup>5</sup>

Fleeing the Syrian-Iraqi zone, most extremist and terrorist groups have a critical need to replenish their ranks with new recruits to form ancillary infrastructure and additional channels of financing. During the last four years, 440 Kazakhstani recruits have been disallowed to enter the zones of terrorist activity (2014: 136 recruits, 2015: 151 recruits, 2016: 91 recruits, 2017: 62 recruits).<sup>6</sup> Despite the measures taken, the problem of Kazakhstani citizens' participation in terrorist activities abroad continues to be relevant.

The most serious threat is expected from the militants or citizens trained in shady foreign theological schools, who come back to their home country. Intensive propaganda of radicalism and terrorism in Kazakh society is able to instigate interconfessional war. 125 citizens of Kazakhstan have been returned or independently returned from the camps of international terrorist organizations or from third countries supporting terrorists and 57 of them were charged with participation in terrorist activities.<sup>7</sup>

Moreover, there is an improvement in the quality of the technical, artistic and psychological components of the information and propaganda materials posted by terrorist organizations on the Internet. The use of social networks allows emissaries of international terrorist organizations to significantly expand their audience in Kazakhstan. This has caused particular categories of



citizens to become more aggressive as well as lose their sense of patriotism and national identity, cultural, moral and family values. The uncontrolled development of these processes is thought to increase the number of people sharing radical ideas, leading to an escalation of violence in society. This is confirmed by the tragic events that occurred in 2016 in the cities of Aktobe and Almaty, where 17 and 5 people respectively, died as a result of terrorist acts.<sup>8</sup>

Now that the country appears to have overcome the peak of attacks, though still experiencing some displays of radicalization, it makes one wonder how Kazakhstan with functional but fledging institutions of a middle state is managing to respond to challenges from ANSAs. The answer lies in revealing patterns of attitudes that the country has taken against terrorist organizations to the extent that ‘middle-power-ness’ allows. To understand better how Kazakhstan exerts its influence on ANSAs, the article considers not only the state’s own policy but also its institutional capability to thwart ANSAs, positioning the country’s image in the world and international state of affairs.

## Methodology

How Kazakhstan’s fight against terrorism is shaped by its middle state capabilities is discussed in three sections. The first section attempts to test if Kazakhstan can be regarded as a middle state. This is done through qualitative evaluation of compliance between empirical indicators and criteria claimed to

Foreign Ministers of the Collective Security Treaty Organization state members met on June 11, 2018 in Kazakhstan.

ALEXANDER SHCHERBAK / TASS via Getty Images

be typical for middle states. The second section is to explore approaches taken by the Kazakh state to counteract extremism and terrorism. Both domestic measures and international initiatives are considered to expose the nature of the chosen attitude. The study also uses a dialectical method to systematize the strength and weaknesses of the approach. The third section argues on the extent to which Kazakhstan's behavior towards armed non-state actors is determined by its middle state capacity. In this section, using the methodology of discourse analysis, we shall touch on the orientation of public policy, institutional and organizational capacity, external forces and transnational bonds straddling state borders, security and economic concerns, and perception of adversaries outside the immediate neighborhood that have all marked the current course of policy against ANSAs.

## Kazakhstan as a Middle Power

There is no conceptual consensus behind the definition of the sizes of states by referring to them as smaller or greater powers. However, it is commonly agreed that their behavior in the international arena tends to differ. The problem with defining categories of states concerns the issue of what the measure should be. The scholars who address this issue can be classified into three groups: (i) those who believe the smallness or greatness of states is directly measurable in certain parameters, (ii) those who suppose that it is the perception or will of the world community that determines whether a state should be regarded as smaller or larger, (iii) those who are convinced that the powerfulness of a state derives from its international behavior. To avoid further debates on the validity of particular measurements, scholars have classified states according to a combination of quantitative and relational criteria.<sup>9</sup>

As an implication, scholars suggest certain types of international behavior derived from the classification. For example, referring to a country as a small state often implies that this state does not exert any influence over world politics and whose opinion is disregarded in the international community. At the same time, middle states, which lie between big and small powers, aspire to become normative mediators and seek compromising positions in various global disputes. They also try to expand their influence and recognition in regional and global governance. Middle power diplomacy's main trait appears to be a foreign policy that respects international norms and law, seeks to get together with 'like-minded' states to be an instrumental bridge between developed and developing countries.<sup>10</sup> They want to get a 'niche' in which they focus their resources on certain areas to get desirable results.<sup>11</sup>

As for great powers like those at the time of the Concert of Europe, when Great Britain, France, Prussia, Austro-Hungary and Russia were the main decision

makers, or superpowers like the U.S. and USSR at the time of Cold War, Keohane<sup>12</sup> defines 'system-influencing' states to be those which cannot individually dominate a system but may nevertheless be able to significantly influence its nature through unilateral as well as multilateral actions. 'System-determining' states are to play a critical role in shaping the system: the 'imperial power' in a unipolar system or the two superpowers in a bipolar system.

According to the aforementioned findings, Kazakhstan can be referred to as a middle state for several reasons. Kazakhstan's territory is 2,724,900 km<sup>2</sup>, making it the 9<sup>th</sup> largest state in the world by its size.<sup>13</sup> Although in economic terms Kazakhstan's capacity is still around small state level, as the country's nominal GDP has not yet exceeded the world's average, accounting for \$9,220 per capita compared to world's average of \$11,310 per capita, Kazakhstan's purchasing power parity (PPP) GDP is twice as high as emerging market and developing economies' PPP GDP, making up \$26,930 against \$12,430 per capita respectively.<sup>14</sup> Another quantitative indicator, demography, can be circumvented as it is widely agreed that having a large population does not guarantee powerfulness of the state.<sup>15</sup> Kazakhstan has a population of only 18,157,100 people,<sup>16</sup> but engages in a number of international initiatives from the world disarmament process to chairmanship in different international organizations including the UN Security Council. In addition, despite the fact that Kazakhstan does not demonstrate its ability to maintain a full spectrum of military capabilities as great powers, it does join peacekeeping operations in distant regions of the world.<sup>17</sup>

Finally, Kazakhstan's foreign policy thoroughly matches all the behavioral characteristics of middle states from both a liberalist and realist perspective. On the one hand, being a trustworthy partner in world affairs, it contributes to the strengthening of international peace and security by maintaining balanced relations with all its neighbors. Kazakhstan has no particular agenda to intervene in the internal policy of conflicting states, and therefore is capable of being an impartial broker in solving conflicts. On the other hand, Kazakhstan is an actor with a limited influence on deciding the distribution of power in the regional system, but is capable of using a range of instruments to change the position of great powers and protect its own position on issues concerning national or regional security that directly affect it.<sup>18</sup>

Kazakhstan's diplomacy has made several important steps to promote peace, security and stability. First is the establishment of the Conference on Inter-



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action and Confidence Building Measures in Asia in 1992, a forum which attempts to mitigate mutual distrust among Asian countries. Second is the attempt to facilitate Nagorno-Karabakh negotiations between Azerbaijan-Armenia and involvement of Kazakh diplomats in the settlement of the Tajikistan Civil War in the 1990s.<sup>19</sup> Third, Kazakhstan convened the Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions since 2003, attended by the authoritative representatives of Islam, Christianity, Judaism, Shintoism, Hinduism and Buddhism to conduct interfaith dialogue.<sup>20</sup> Fourth, it contributed to the comprehensive settlement of the Iranian nuclear issue by hosting two rounds of negotiations between Iran and the P5+1 group in Almaty in February and May 2013.<sup>21</sup> Fifth is the role of President Nursultan Nazarbayev in normalizing the Russian-Turkish tensions which were exacerbated after the “jet shooting down” incident in November 2015.<sup>22</sup> Finally, the latest is Kazakhstan's contribution to the settlement of the Syrian civil war hosting three rounds of peace negotiations in Astana which included both political figures and representatives of the Syrian opposition.<sup>23</sup>

Thus, it can be claimed that Kazakhstan is a middle state trying not only to mediate conflicts and seek compromising positions in different conflicts but also expanding its influence in the Central Asian region as well as in global affairs. Respecting the international law, along with building an instrumental bridge between nations based on ‘wise power’ –alternating from ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ powers– asserts Kazakhstan's position as a responsible regional power. ‘Wise power,’ a new concept which represents taking balanced political decisions incorporating both public opinion and equity, is currently being promoted by Kazakhstan.<sup>24</sup> With a historical legacy of multiculturalism, Kazakh mentality of hospitality directs the state's ‘niche diplomacy’ to focus on building trust of other states and the world's population in order to lay a stable foundation for peace and public consent.

### Approaches of the Republic of Kazakhstan to Counteract Terrorism

Although Kazakhstan is, by all means, trying to promote the image of ‘a country with no enemies,’ destructive forces such as ANSAs make the state engage in the alignment against such groups. Furthermore, the Republic of Kazakhstan has developed a system of international initiatives and domestic measures



(L-R) Representatives of Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Russia, and Turkmenistan sign a protocol on cooperation in combating terrorism in the Caspian Sea on August 12, 2018.

ALEXEI NIKOLSKY / TASS via Getty Images

to ensure the security of society from the threat of terrorism, the effectiveness of which has been consistently increasing.

### ***International Initiatives***

Kazakhstan has joined all the fundamental international universal acts in the field of combating terrorism. Special state bodies and law enforcement agencies actively interact with the Collective Security Treaty Organization and the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the Anti-Terrorist Center of the Commonwealth of Independent States, the Anti-Terrorism Unit of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, and the United Nations Security Council Counter-Terrorism Committee. Expanding international cooperation, the Republic of Kazakhstan ratified 15 of the 19 resolutions and other United Nations documents on combating terrorism.

As part of the implementation of the political address of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev, the draft Code of Conduct on the Attainment of a World Free from Terrorism has been developed for the member states of the United Nations Security Council. The Code is to form the basis for the formation of the Global Anti-Terrorist Coalition (Network) under the auspices of the United Nations. The chairmanship of the Republic of Kazakhstan in the sanctions committees pursuant to Resolutions 1267 and 1988 facilitates the consolidation of the efforts of the United Nations member states in countering the terrorist organizations such as 'ISIS,' 'al-Qaeda' and 'Taliban.'

## Operational work is underway to identify individuals involved in extremist and terrorist activities in Kazakhstan, as well as those hidden in Kazakhstan from the prosecution of law enforcement agencies of foreign countries for terrorist offenses committed outside Kazakhstan

However, it should be noted that most international counter-terrorism measures fail because of inter-state rivalry. The example of great power rivalry over the fight against terrorists in the Middle East and ongoing transnational crime perspectives make one believe that the U.S., Russia, and European powers have far more sophisticated goals and interests than the battle against terrorists.<sup>25</sup> This means there is no obvious factor contributing to resoluteness of middle states to engage in a war against terrorists

along with the great powers. Vigilance of being dragged into dangerous and expensive enterprises withholds middle states from such endeavors. Instead, in compliance with middle state theory, Kazakhstan's position was to provide a negotiation table known as the 'Astana Process' for the confronting parties in Syria, which has been continuing since January 2017.<sup>26</sup>

### *Domestic Measures*

In domestic affairs, Kazakhstan's public policy is focused to ensure inter-religious and inter-ethnic harmony, protection of the interests of young people, and information security of the state. On December 28, 2015, the Head of the State approved the Concept for the Development of the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan (APK), which includes activities aimed at improving the Kazakhstan model of inter-ethnic tolerance and social harmony (until 2025).

The objectives of the Concept are the further development of the APK institution as one having a constitutional status, increasing its role in strengthening Kazakhstan's identity and unity on the principle of citizenship, promoting the values of a nation-wide patriotic idea and the formation of a nation with a united future. The main objectives of the Concept are: (i) strengthening the role of the APK as a coordinator of the work of state bodies at all levels and institutions of civil society to strengthen public accord, Kazakhstan's identity and unity as a key factor in the successful implementation of the Kazakhstan 2050 Strategy, (ii) the introduction of new formats for interaction between the state and ethnocultural and other public associations to strengthen public harmony and national unity, (iii) strengthening the role of the state language as a consolidating factor, development of cultures, languages and traditions of the people of Kazakhstan, (iv) popularization of the Kazakhstan model of identity and unity in the international community with the participation of compatriots living abroad and diplomatic representations of the Republic of Kazakhstan,

(v) interaction of APK with international and civil society organizations of foreign states.<sup>27</sup>

In addition, considerable work has been done to create and improve the legislative and organizational base for identifying and suppressing the causes of extremism and terrorism. Initiated by the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the laws 'On Countering Extremism' of February 18, 2005<sup>28</sup> and 'On Counteracting Terrorism' of July 13, 1999<sup>29</sup> establish the legal basis for the prevention of extremism and terrorism, as well as defining the basic conceptual apparatus and competences of state bodies in this area. They also emphasize the basic principles of ensuring the protection of rights and freedoms of citizens in this field.

**Table 1:** External and Internal Factors Contributing to Terrorism in Kazakhstan

External Factors	Internal Factors
Proximity of Kazakhstan to the centers of armed conflicts, including those against radical religious groups, and migration vulnerability of the country	Existing socio-economic and bureaucracy problems as well as corruption of certain state officials
Propaganda of ideas of religious extremism and terrorism from abroad on the Internet	Low level of religious literacy of the population, along with disadvantages in the moral and patriotic education of the younger generation
Intensive training of militants and fellow citizens to engage in terrorist ideas in camps located in neighboring states	Uncontrolled functioning of religious buildings and the low level of professional training of priests
Kazakhstani citizens studying in foreign theological institutions, coming under the influence of extremist and terrorist ideology	Tendency of the religious radical communities to unite with criminal structures, especially in prisons

**Source:** State Program for Combating Religious Extremism and Terrorism in the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2018-2022.

In accordance with identified external and internal factors (see Table 1), the Kazakh Government has developed the State Program for Combating Religious Extremism and Terrorism in the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2018-2022<sup>30</sup> with the aim of ensuring the security of individuals, society and the state against violent manifestations of religious extremism and threats of terrorism. This is intended to be achieved by working in the following three directions: (i) improving the measures for the prevention of religious extremism and terrorism, aimed at the formation of a tolerant religious consciousness and immunity to radical ideology in society, (ii) increasing the effectiveness of detection and suppression of religious extremism and terrorism, including the perfection of activities of special forces and law enforcement agencies, (iii) improving the system of measures to minimize and/or eliminate the consequences of extremist and terrorist activities.

**The inability of middle states to –individually or in cooperation– deal with challenges coming from outside means that Kazakhstan has failed to set up its own international agenda to stop radical terror groups entering its territory or emerging inside**

To fulfill the first direction, information, and propaganda work in the religious environment has been activated using the capabilities of civil society organizations, official clergy and media. The students of high school (9-11 grades) and technical and professional colleges have been fully covered to master 'Foundations of Religious Studies' course (a total of 2.7 million students in 7,460 schools and 849 colleges). The disciplines 'Religious Studies' and 'Foundations of Ethnic Tolerance' have been included as elective courses in all 129 universities in the country (527,226 students).

In addition to these measures, counter-propaganda activities (meetings, conversations with the population, including sermons) are being implemented. In particular, more than 15,000 infor-

mation stories have been broadcasted in the media, about 4,500 materials have been posted on the Internet, over 200 commercials have been released on TV channels.<sup>31</sup> To protect users of the Internet and social networks from the influence of propaganda of terrorism and extremism, in 2017, more than 620,000 materials were blocked (2015: 150,000 materials, 2016: 700,000 materials).<sup>32</sup>

As regards the second direction, the mechanisms of interaction of state bodies on the issues of countering religious extremism and terrorism, including the prevention of extremist/terrorist acts and response to terrorist threats, have been created and regulated by normative legal acts. The necessary conditions for coordinating the actions of special-forces and law enforcement bodies in combating religious extremism and terrorism are ensured. The potential of the security forces is constantly growing.

Operational work is underway to identify individuals involved in extremist and terrorist activities in Kazakhstan, as well as those hidden in Kazakhstan from the prosecution of law enforcement agencies of foreign countries for terrorist offenses committed outside Kazakhstan. The measures of criminal punishment for terrorist and extremist activities have been toughened. Since 2014, 30 terrorist actions have been prevented and thwarted while still in the early stages of preparation (2014: 3 terrorists, 2015: 4 terrorists, 2016: 12 terrorists and 2017: 11 terrorists).<sup>33</sup>

In the third direction, the basic elements of the system of anti-terrorist protection of the population and critical facilities have been formed. So, in 2017, according to the Committee of National Security, the level of readiness of op-

erational headquarters (regional, district/city) to conduct anti-terrorist operations and to suppress acts of terrorism was at a level of 92 percent. The share of institutions and organizations involved in minimizing and/or eliminating the consequences of acts of terrorism, readiness to fully meet the challenges in this area was at 90 percent, while the proportion of objects vulnerable to terrorism, tested and meeting the requirements of anti-terrorist security was at 40 percent.<sup>34</sup> At the same time, legislative norms have been updated in the sphere of arms turnover, security activities and regulation of migration.

However, despite all the aforementioned meticulously detailed state actions on this issue, there are still areas to work on (see Table 2). Furthermore, it is worth looking at those counter-terrorism measures from a wider angle to see if Kazakhstan's approach is viable in terms of middle states capability to thwart terrorism.

**Table 2: Strengths and Weaknesses of Counter-terrorism in Kazakhstan**

Strengths	Weaknesses
State policy is aimed at ensuring domestic political stability, including the countering of extremism and terrorism	Increasing number of adherents of a radical religious ideology
Joint efforts of the state and society to combat corruption	Insufficient effectiveness of awareness-raising work
State's socio-economic measures aimed at improving the welfare of the population	Imperfection of the system to counter the spread of materials of extremist and terrorist content, including via Internet
Religious tolerance, inter-confessional and inter-ethnic consent in the society	Unregulated theological education in the country
Measures to counter religious extremism and terrorism are reoriented towards strengthening preventive work	The lack of effective measures to protect Kazakh citizens from preachers of radical ideology abroad
The internal system of coordination of counteraction to religious extremism and terrorism under the aegis of the Anti-Terrorist Center of the Republic of Kazakhstan	Low level of involvement of civil society institutions in counteracting religious extremism and terrorism
Involvement of local executive bodies in the prevention of religious extremism and terrorism by creating anti-terrorist commissions in the regions	Imperfection of mechanisms for identifying sources and ways of financing extremism and terrorism
Accumulation of practical experience of counteraction to religious extremism and terrorism	Special forces and law enforcement bodies are insufficiently equipped with modern technology, weapons and other advanced equipment to counteract extremism and terrorism
Strong international cooperation, including within the framework of international and regional anti-terrorist structures	The need to further enhance the professional level of state officials that organize the work on counteraction of religious extremism and terrorism

**Source:** State Program for Combating Religious Extremism and Terrorism in the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2018-2022.



Delegates of the Second Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions attend a plenary session in Astana on September 12, 2006.

STANISLAV FILIPPOV  
AFP / Getty Images

## 'Middle Power' Limits for Kazakhstan

Kazakhstan's approach in the fight against ANSAs is shaped not only by law-making bodies, intelligence services or public officials and citizens' initiatives. There are several invariable factors that affect Kazakhstan's position which is believed to derive from its 'middle-power-ness.' First and foremost, the inability of Kazakhstan to thwart ANSAs comes from the drive to democratize the country fashioned by most middle states. It is a widely accepted view that even the established democracies tend to suffer from terrorist attacks as the ideas of freedom of expression, a free media, etc., hinder them from sophisticated surveillance operations against potential terrorists.<sup>35</sup> Non-interference into private information, freedom of movement and expression are leveraged by non-state actors. Therefore, there is a wide agreement that there is no ideal balance between security and liberty.<sup>36</sup> You can achieve both, but not at the same level.

In particular, the idea of democracy itself in a way nurtures new recruits for terrorists by encouraging people to enjoy all their rights to freedom. The phenomenon of terrorism has evolved and expanded in both the ideological and numerical sense through engaging absolutely various types of movements in middle states (not only the so-called Global Jihad imposing religious ideas but separatists intending to get independence as well). For example, looking at

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ETA in Spain or terror acts of Norwegian protestant fundamentalist Anders Breivik, we may well realize that terrorism is not a concept that could be attached to any conventional patterned categories of threat or treated as a monolithic threat, as politicians and the media so often do.<sup>37</sup> Instead, it can be seen as a way of expressing personal discontent that is becoming natural and common for any person in any country.

Although democratic regimes are largely praised for offering public freedom in expressing their personal opinion, certain groups in society still feel oppressed when they are prohibited from wearing religious clothes such as the burka or hijab. In the worst scenario, they feel it is only they who are required to obey the law and shared values of the majority. Such individuals may feel too weak to change the policy and law, which may even lead them to join protest movements or even establish terrorist groups to support the opinions of the minorities.

Second, the level of Kazakhstan development does not allow it to adjust institutionally to the new circumstances and challenges coming from the ANSAs as fast as it is necessary justifying the newly undertaken civil-protection initiatives. Namely, new laws enacted in 2017 by Kazakhstani governmental bodies on toughening control over the social life of citizens inspired by the anti-terrorist measures have raised a bitter dispute. They introduced the 'obligatory temporary registration at the place of residence' according to which Kazakhstani citizens now have to formally declare to a public institution where he or she is currently living, if they are planning to live somewhere different from their permanent place of residence for longer than 30 days. This law was intended to monitor migration movements as well as to facilitate the search for potential radicalized groups but was perceived as nothing but the intrusion into the private life of law-obeying citizens.

In addition, there is low organizational preparation for new threats and challenges inside the country –intelligence analysts are now forced to spend much more time on the extraction and linking together of a huge amount of heterogeneous data. But their real analysis takes enormous time.<sup>38</sup> This also raises

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the need to improve the data analysis techniques increasing the number of private companies involved in the actions of the intelligence community and engaged in linguistic training of specialists, especially in foreign languages like Urdu, Pashto, Farsi and Arabic.

Furthermore, despite the claims of technological advances in the fight against global terrorism, there is a number of other factors affecting the work of the security services. A serious problem, according to Zarakol,<sup>39</sup> is an active process of radicalization. The nature of the terrorist threat sources underwent significant changes when they began to come not only from the 'foreigners coming into democratic countries,' but also from local citizens. Moreover, the inability of middle states to –individually or in cooperation– deal with challenges coming from outside

means that Kazakhstan has failed to set up its own international agenda to stop radical terror groups entering its territory or emerging inside. The cases of Kazakhstan and other Central Asian countries prove the fact that no matter how peaceful and multi-cultural your country's policy is, terrorism can always be an issue.

Another important factor, which is out of the control of middle states is globalization, is defined as the gradual expansion of interaction processes, forming organization and cooperation outside the traditional spaces determined by sovereignty. Scholars claim that besides its economic and cultural implications, which are often perceived as a salient threat, globalization firstly contributes to the 'debellicization' of security (that is moving away from militarism recognizing the need for more sophisticated and multifaceted responses to today's threats), although it is not directly proven to cause security issues.<sup>40</sup> The ability of non-state actors to organize transnationally, meet virtually and utilize terrorist tactics has surely been enhanced by globalization. State remains the central actor simply because non-state actors are being measured, located, monitored and contained in traditional terms.<sup>41</sup> Last but not least, it should be acknowledged that some particular states may be interested to have radicalized non-state actors themselves because of particular short-term goals.<sup>42</sup> The presence of ANSAs justifies the stiffening of authoritarian rule or provides a motive to isolate the country.

To recap, over-ramification of governmental institutions that make it too difficult to mobilize against such a multifaceted threat, along with incapability to withstand the external threats are the main limitations observed. The so-

cio-economic strain is an obvious and natural trigger for radicals and terrorists to mobilize unrest against the state. This, in turn, becomes an enormously arduous task for the state to take care of and a lingering process to overturn, further weakening the state. The main problem is that although existing institutional bureaucracy is aimed at preventing of terrorism and controlling radicalized groups, there are certain forces that are out of reach for developing middle states such as Kazakhstan.

## Conclusion

Although at the dawn of its independence Kazakhstan posed itself as a small state focusing on survival as well as relying largely on the aid of great powers in terms of security and trade, it managed to recalibrate into a middle power state. Their chosen path of 'multi-vector foreign policy,' that emphasizes maintaining good relations with Russia while also courting the interest of other great powers as well as nuclear disarmament, has contributed to what Kazakhstan is today. The core doctrine of Kazakh foreign policy has managed to secure its borders, build the trust of other nations, establish and develop bilateral and multilateral interactions with other states self-identifying itself as a state with no enemies. Today it extends to include growing worldwide interest, territory, natural resources, a growing economy and international activism serve as a solid foundation to enter the so-called club of middle powers.

Despite the fact that the appearance of new threats from ANSAs puzzles all categories of states worldwide, it can be observed that Kazakhstan's line of anti-terrorist action is patterned to concentrate around its own population, territory and certain type of instruments of influence. This is explained by the lack of resources and the international image of non-interference which restrict the state's actions into a particular course. In the pursuit of middle states' adherence to respect the superiority of international law, Kazakhstan's position is not to thwart terrorism and extremism around the world, but simply to protect its own citizens.

Being a peaceful country, it does not possess a large army to engage in military operations, although 'KAZBAT' Special Forces (peacekeeping battalion) are sent to peacekeeping operations abroad on a regular basis. The association of Kazakhstan with many anti-terrorist oriented organizations allows it to take advantage of exchanging experiences and taking coordinated actions. At the same time, Kazakhstan prefers to emphasize the role of international organizations in joining international forces against the threat.

In spite of the decline over the past two years, terrorism is still considered a relevant threat for Kazakhstan at present. The salient reason appears to be

security and liberty issues arising for the public when the state is attempting to ensure the protection of its citizens through surveillance operations. Along with this, Kazakhstan tends to lack experience in the institutional adjustment of governmental bodies to new circumstances and organizational preparation of special-forces for new kinds of challenges. Globalization, as well as technological advancement, is making the task of fighting against ANSAs even harder by affecting the state's ability to control threats and societal perception over security issues.

Summing up, this article concludes that (i) Kazakhstan is an all-round middle power considering its capabilities, international behavior as well as building its 'niche' in forming public peace and consent, (ii) Kazakhstan's fight against terrorism is limited in terms of focus (its own population), range (its own territory) and instruments (criminal conviction and anti-radicalism propaganda) employed, (iii) Kazakhstan's counter-terrorism pattern fits the middle state theory since it focuses on the involvement of international organizations, preferring not to participate in international anti-terrorism campaigns militarily, although it contributes in shaping the context for negotiation opportunities as a third party, (iv) middle state vulnerabilities in terms of institutional development and a limited capacity to withstand external and internal threats makes it hard for Kazakhstan to fully ensure the protection of its people from the dangers and threats posed by armed non-state actors. ■

## Endnotes

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