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A Framework for Explaining National P/CVE Programs: A Case Study of Kazakhstan

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ABSTRACT

This study extends the P/CVE scholarship from the "what" and "how" questions of assessment (What and how do countries do in P/CVE area?) to the underlying "why" issues (Why do countries choose to define and approach P/CVE in certain ways?). Toward the goal of explaining states' P/CVE programs, we put forth a "3-Is" framework emphasizing the impact interests, ideas, and institutions on their measures for countering violent extremism. Jointly, these concepts direct our attention to the pragmatic and ideational aspects of policymaking as well as the countries' institutional legacies. We apply this framework to the case of Kazakhstan to illuminate and explain certain highly visible aspects of its P/CVE program.

The "Global War on Terror" spawn a range of security-centered approaches to countering terrorism (CT). These approaches helped the U.S. – a country at the helm of the global CT effort – to achieve its main strategic objective of preventing another catastrophic attack against the homeland. Yet, these measures have fallen short in reducing the overall levels of terrorist violence around the world or stabilizing Afghanistan and the Middle East.[1] Concerns with the spread of terrorist violence prompted the emergence of tools and methods aimed at preventing radicalization and recruitment into terrorism by addressing the underlying factors of violence and empowering communities to recognize and deal with extremism before it takes root in neighborhoods and individuals. Variously labelled as "preventing violent extremism" (PVE), "countering violent extremism" (CVE), "preventing radicalization to violent extremism," or "preventing and countering violent extremism," (P/CVE),[2] these "soft approaches" that seek to prevent or intervene in the radicalization processes using non-coercive means have proliferated in recent years.[3]

Diverse in their emphasis and scope, the P/CVE policies and programs are now recognized as essential and necessary components of a more comprehensive approach to combating terrorism. To assist countries in integrating systematic preventive measures into their CT efforts, mounting levels of international support have become available to governments.[4] In addition to training, best practice sharing, and guidelines by non-governmental and capacity-sharing organizations (e.g. Hedayah, the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund), and specialized forums of regional and

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international groups (e.g. the Global Counterterrorism Forum, and the EU Radicalization Awareness Network), the United Nations and its various agencies have provided extensive assistance to national policymakers in translating international guidance to domestic contexts.[5]

The P/CVE scholarship has shadowed the rapid growth in policies and practices directed toward violent extremism. The large, if fragmented, the body of P/CVE literature spanning multiple disciplines has largely focused on assessing the effectiveness of CVE policies and specific interventions. The study of P/CVE *policymaking* that produces the diversity of strategies, approaches, and programs has remained largely underexplored. Consequently, we have a limited understanding of how international and regional P/CVE frameworks get transposed into the national settings, and how and why these P/CVE national programs vary.

Why do countries differ in their P/CVE strategies despite the similarity of international instruments? What factors shape the content of national P/CVE programs? To answer these questions, this study puts forth a framework for understanding the design and implementation of national P/CVE strategies and demonstrates its analytical utility using a case study of Kazakhstan's P/CVE. Our argument, in a nutshell, is that P/CVE strategies are defined by political considerations, assumptions, and institutional path-dependencies that account for the immense variation of national P/CVE approaches. This "3-Is" framework (interests-ideas-institutions) emphasizes both pragmatic and ideational aspects of policymaking as well as the countries' institutional legacies.

The question of drivers of national P/CVE policies warrants systematic analysis for a number of reasons. The P/CVE scholarship has been laser-focused on determining effective measures for countering violent extremism. The possibility that some countries may be motivated to adopt unproductive CVE policies for political reasons, or constrained in their ability to design successful CVE responses has been implied in these research efforts but not systematically examined. The studies of national P/CVE efforts have discovered that some national governments deliberately bias their P/CVE policies to suppress political opposition, while others simplistically emulate models developed elsewhere ignoring the nuances of their national contexts.[6] To encourage more meaningful and country-specific approaches to violent radicalization, it requires to understand the motivations of the national governments' responses within P/CVE.

Additionally, P/CVE policies seek to prevent future acts of violence and, therefore, they depend on a clear definition of violent extremism and a plausible account of causal mechanisms explaining how the P/CVE measures reduce the likelihood of violence. Unfortunately, the available P/CVE global templates and national models tend to be inconsistent or vague in defining violent extremism and its drivers.[7] This lack of coherence in the field gives national governments considerable leeway in construing violent extremism and its sources. This, too, amplifies the significance of gaining knowledge in factors that shape countries' understandings within P/CVE.[8]

The article begins with a brief overview of the "3-I" approach that we apply to the case study of Kazakhstan's P/CVE in section two. Kazakhstan has worked extensively with its international partners to develop a set of comprehensive P/CVE policies for a national program on fighting religious extremism and terrorism. Yet, Kazakhstan's approach to P/CVE remains heavily securitized. It confounds extremism with "foreign" and "radical" Islam and conflates radicalization with violence. While extolling its effort

in P/CVE, the government of Kazakhstan contends that the threat of violent extremism remains high, therefore implying that its extensive P/CVE measures have failed in stemming the rise in homegrown radicalization. It raises the question as to why the Kazakh authorities remain committed to the P/CVE construct that appears to be counterproductive to achieving its aims.

The empirical materials of the paper are composed of original data from interviews, legal documents, and a survey of 296 specialists responsible for implementing P/CVE programs in Kazakhstan at the local level. The survey was carried out in 17 akimats (regional municitalities) of the country in November-December of 2020.[9]

P/CVE as Public Policy: A Framework for Examining States' Efforts at Combating Extremism

In this study, we treat P/CVE as a type of public policy, which can be defined as a purposive course of action created and enacted in response to matters of concern to society.[10] To understand how governments design P/CVE strategies, including ways in which public authorities conceive of violent extremism, understand its drivers, and devise responses, we draw on the insights of public policy theory. From the vantage point of public policy theorizing, decision-makers rarely, if ever, maximize the benefits of the policy to society consistent with the rational choice expectations. The latter views P/CVE policymaking as a deliberate and orderly process of cost-benefit analysis of policy options in pursuit of the P/CVE aims. Instead, decision-makers are constrained by limited and incomplete information; multiple, often unclear, preferences, objectives, and value-based considerations; and formal and informal routines and practices of the institutions, in which they operate.[11] As a consequence of this "bounded rationality," most public policies rely on "satisficing" rather than "optimizing" decision-making strategies, as often assumed by the advocates of the evidence-based P/CVE policymaking.[12]

There are many individual-level and contextual factors that influence public policy choices. Public policy literature emphasizes the role of three facets of the environment shaping decision-makers' preferences and information available to them: *interests*, *ideas*, and *institutions*. *Interests* are the main component of political motivation that spurs governments' engagement with social, economic, and political issues.[13] In the realm of P/CVE policies, interests are the reasons for the governments' involvement in countering violent extremism. *Ideas* can be thought of as the types of "cognitive anchors", i.e. deeply ingrained attitudes, preferences, and beliefs held to be true, which serve as filters for all incoming information. In P/CVE, ideas are assumptions and paradigms that underpin conceptions of extremism and its drivers. *Institutions* include formal and informal rules, routines, cultures, resources, or constraints that shape the behavior and relationships of policymakers.[14] The advantage of looking at the "3-Is" (ideas-interests-institutions) is that jointly they highlight both the complexity of the decision-making environment and the plurality of factors shaping policies.

To illustrate the utility of the 3-Is framework for understanding P/CVE, consider an abbreviated example of CVE in the United States, which is considered to be a driving force and translator of CVE policies to the world. CVE emerged in U.S. public

policy space at a moment of crisis in its counterterrorism strategy. The U.S. "war on terror" approaches that involved terrorist leadership decapitation campaigns and regime change failed to stem violence in Iraq and Afghanistan. Washington's extrajudicial killings and torture of terrorist suspects prompted widespread public outcry and provided fodder for terrorist propaganda. Interested in improving the effectiveness of American counterterrorism strategy, U.S. senior officials in the Bush administration called for a "strategy against violent extremism."[15] Thus, the inception of CVE in the U.S. was informed by the government's *interest* in increasing the utility of security-oriented counterterrorism measures. The institutionalization of CVE in U.S. policies during the Obama era followed the proliferation of terrorist recruitment online that resulted in multiple attacks in Europe and an exodus of young people from the West to ISIS-controlled territories in Syria and Iraq.[16]

Interests alone cannot explain the specific meanings ascribed to main concepts within the P/CVE policy, which is also informed by *ideas*. Although the origins of CVE in the U.S. go back to the mid-1970s uptick in the activity of extremists adhering to far-right ideologies (and this group has been responsible for the majority of acts of violence in the U.S. in many years since the 9/11 attacks),[17] American CVE efforts have overwhelmingly targeted Muslim communities at home and Islamist groups abroad. Another idea informing American CVE is that there is a discernible process of radicalization resulting in terrorist violence. Despite being discredited by years of scholarly research, the U.S. CVE strategies and programs have been based on the assumptions that [religious] extremist ideologies lead to violence, but the process of radicalization can be reversed using interventions on the basis of predictive risk indicators.

The CVE policies were fully institutionalized during the Obama era. A self-described multilateralist,[18] President Obama emphasized international rather than domestic aspects of CVE. Countering violent extremism has become a prerogative of the State Department's Bureau of Counterterrorism, which was named the lead coordinating bureau on CVE issues in the agency. The Bureau works with the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), which has become a lead implementer of the American CVE programming overseas. The State Department and USAID CVE initiatives have largely reflected the *institutional* "know-how" of these organizations,[19] which assisted foreign governments in developing and implementing effective CVE policies using available tools, such as development assistance, conflict resolution, youth engagement, criminal justice and rule of law reforms, educational initiatives, and efforts aimed at strengthening community resilience.[20]

As this brief, and by no means comprehensive, example of U.S. CVE policy demonstrates, the 3-Is (interests-ideas-institutions) framework can be a useful analytical device for understanding countries' P/CVE policies applicable to various contexts. As discussed in the introduction to this article, the recent decade has seen rapid globalization of P/CVE strategies through policy emulation and transfers adding another layer of influence on state policymaking.[21] Yet, many international and state-led initiatives aimed at assisting countries in developing national P/CVE strategies allow national governments define "violent extremism" and decide what drivers of radicalization to address. The conceptual vagueness and latitude in picking-and-choosing measures to address the select drivers of mobilization leave ample room for the impact of interests, ideas, and institutions in the design of national P/CVE programs.[22]

Kazakhstan's P/CVE: The Influence of Interests, Ideas, and Institutions

In the three decades since independence, Kazakhstan has made a journey from conveying invincibility to extremist violence in the 1990s, to embracing the need for widespread counterterrorism measures in the 2000s, and to acknowledge the importance of preventive strategies to counteract the rise in religious extremism in the 2010s. For a long time, the country, where 70 per cent of the 18 million population identify as Muslim,[23] was spared of terrorist violence that has afflicted its Central Asian neighbors. Kazakhstan's first president Nursultan Nazarbayev (1990-2019) had touted the republic as a beacon of stability in the volatile region and used this reputation to court investments and reputation on the global stage. A spate of terrorist incidents in 2011-2012 and 2016 marked a turning point in Kazakhstan's approach to countering terrorism and extremism. In October 2013, Kazakhstan unveiled its first program on fighting religious extremism and terrorism for 2013-2017. Upon its conclusion, the government approved another, more ambitious program for 2018-2022 designating nearly $900 million in funding to various CT and P/CVE initiatives. Both programs have been supplemented with a range of foreign-funded projects administered in partnership with the United States and international organizations, such as UNDP, UNODC, and the OSCE.

Several aspects of Kazakhstan's P/CVE stand out. First, despite the scale of the P/CVE program, it continues treating religious extremism as "alien" and "foreign" to Kazakhstan. It is also narrowly focused on rooting out the "wrong" and "dangerous" Islam and imparting the "good" Islamic ideas to Kazakh Muslims on the premise that the lack of proper religious knowledge constitutes a root course of extremism. Second, despite the corresponding effort to promulgate an approved version of Islam to youth and expand the monitoring of the Internet for reducing the influence of external factors on radicalization, Kazakhstan's P/CVE remains heavily securitized. It prioritizes detection, persecution, and punishment for extremist and terrorist offenses over their prevention. A failure to differentiate extremism and violent extremism in Kazakh law has resulted in a situation where the majority of hefty sentences for extremist and terrorist crimes are handed out for offenses that do not involve violence or planned attacks.

According to the Kazakh authorities, the threat of violent extremism in the country has not abated. The volume of online and print materials containing extremist propaganda has been on the rise. Two years into the new program to fight religious extremism and terrorism, Kazakhstan saw a nearly 20% increase in extremist and terrorist offenses.[24] International human rights observers have expressed concerns that the Kazakh government's efforts, which infringe on political and religious freedoms, may be counterproductive.[25] This section applies the "3-I" framework (interests-ideas-institutions) to make sense of Kazakhstan's efforts to counter violent extremism.

National Interests as a Source of P/CVE

Interests, which refer to the enduring needs or wants, the pursuit of which promote a state's well-being, is the first elements of the proposed framework. For many states, interest in security from terrorist and extremist violence has been a motivating factor

in the development and adoption of P/CVE. Kazakhstan is no exception to this trend: its engagement with P/CVE followed the perceived deficiencies of the CT measures. In the 2000s, the Kazakh government adopted extensive counterterrorism measures as part of the global and regional effort to combat terrorism.[26] The growing sense of insecurity about the republic's burgeoning religious sector contributed to the adoption of policies aimed at tightening control of religious practices. The 2005 Extremism Law, for instance, gave the Kazakh government extensive powers in identifying and designating a religious or political group as an extremist organization, banning its activities, and criminalizing membership in the group. The government stepped up its anti-extremism measures, which focused on restrictions and greater scrutiny of the so-called "nontraditional" religious groups, including Muslims who practice non-official Islamic varieties.

These measures did not prevent a slew of terrorist incidents in 2011-2012 in Aqtobe, Atyrau and Zhambyl regions of Kazakhstan. The attacks included suicide and car bombings, shootings with police, bungled bomb-making attempts, and lone-actor incidents.[27] The National Security Committee of Kazakhstan announced that terrorist cells with connections to foreign terrorist groups were uncovered in Almaty and Atyrau regions. The Jund al-Khalifah group (the Soldiers of Caliphate) claimed two bomb explosions in October 2011 strengthening the government's conviction in the uptick of religiously motivated and foreign-inspired violent extremism in Kazakhstan.[28] President Nazarbayev said at the time that the threat of a new onslaught of international terrorism was high and directed his government to develop an expanded counterterrorism policy that would include measures to counter religious extremism.[29] The President's directive laid the basis for the development of P/CVE-specific policy, which was approved in October 2013. Conceived as an extension of counterterrorism, Kazakhstan's P/CVE was designed to reduce the threat posed by violent extremist groups. It was a reaction to terrorist violence in Aktobe, Atyrau and Taraz in 2011, which was a crude awaking to the extremism threat that had planted its roots in the country.[30]

In addition to security interests, Kazakhstan's P/CVE effort has been driven by its identity-related concerns steeped in ideas of regional and global leadership. Claims to Kazakhstan's regional and global standing validated by external recognition of its economic progress, domestic stability, and membership in international organizations have been intrinsically linked to the Nazarbayev regime's legitimacy. Kazakhstan's ambition to lead the regional and global fight against extremism has been consistent with its drive for international visibility and reputation.[31] For instance, during its chairmanship of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in 2010, Kazakhstan sought to bring attention to the regional problems with terrorism, extremism, and the spill-over of the Afghan conflict.[32] As a leader of the Organization of the Islamic Conference in 2011-2012, Kazakhstan called for common approaches to combatting international terrorism. In 2013, Kazakhstan celebrated the 10th anniversary of the Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions that it used to position itself as a peacemaking platform embracing preventive measures against the violence of any kind. The first CVE strategy adopted the same year was a logical step consistent with the international image of Kazakhstan as a regional and global leader in peacemaking.

The approval of the second State program on countering religious extremism and terrorism for 2018-2022[33] could also be attributed to the security and identity-related

interests of Kazakhstan. A new spate of violence in Summer 2016 when gunmen seized caches of weapons and rammed a minibus into the National Guard facility in Aktobe came as a shock to state authorities illuminating deficiencies of P/CVE in the country. The rising Internet-based outreach by Al-Qaeda and ISIS also made it critically important for all affected governments to design a counterstrategy to stem the foreign fighters' recruitment.

The institutionalization of CVE in U.S. policies and dissemination of CVE ideas globally sent a strong demand signal for a change in the approach to countering terrorism and violent extremism. With technical support from Hedayah and drawing on experiences of the U.S., Norway, Finland, Canada, and UAE, Kazakhstan developed a new P/CVE program for 2018-2022. Adopted a few months before the United Nations unveiled its own plan of action to prevent violent extremism, the new ambitious P/CVE program positioned Kazakhstan as a regional leader in countering violent extremism.[34]

Finally, in many authoritarian contexts, states' national interests are inextricably connected to the interests of the ruling administration. In Kazakhstan, the interests of its authoritarian government as well as the main agencies that have served as a bulwark of the non-democratic regime have also played a role in the development of the P/CVE program. Kazakhstan's legal definition of extremism emphasizes the use of violence or the threat of violence for obstructing decision-making and challenging the political order in Kazakhstan. It demonstrates that its government has been mostly concerned with those security challenges that threaten to destabilize the state and, therefore, upset the authoritarian status quo. It comes as no surprise that the extremism law has been applied to criminalize non-systemic opposition by the ruling regime, like the Democratic Choice of Kazakhstan, which was banned as an extremism organization in 2018.[35] The two main confessions – the Spiritual Administration of the Muslims of Kazakhstan (SAMK) and the local synod of the Orthodox Church in Kazakhstan have also lobbied the government to place restrictions on the so-called "non-traditional" religions.[36] The official representatives of the SAMK and Orthodox Church have both whipped up the threat posed by the nontraditional religious beliefs and rendered themselves to help the state in preventing and countering religious extremist ideas.

The Ideational Sources of Kazakhstan's P/CVE Program

Interests in national security, regional and global reputation and the regime's concerns with its preservation have served as an impetus for P/CVE development in Kazakhstan. Yet, the specific meanings of terrorism and extremism and assumptions that inform preventive measures in the republic have been shaped by *ideas*, i.e. deeply ingrained attitudes, preferences, and understandings that underpin conceptions of violent extremism and its drivers.

First, the Kazakh authorities have habitually portrayed all types of violence in religious terms making extremism and terrorism synonymous with religious extremism.[37] For example, the government blamed the spate of violence in Atyrau and Taraz in 2011 and the gunmen attack in Aktobe in 2016 on the Islamists. If Jund al-Kilafah (Soldiers of the Caliphate) took responsibility for the 2011 bombings and attacks against police, no credible claims of responsibility surfaced for the 2016 attacks, even

though the Interior Ministry accused "radical, non-traditional religious movements" in violence.[38] Similarly, when the protests motivated by political and economic grievances turned violent in Almaty in January 2022, the president dubbed the rioters "terrorists" and "Islamists" trained and funded from abroad.[39] Because of this tight association between extremism and religion, religious (typically Islamic) groups operating outside the vague confines of the "official" interpretations of Islam[40] have been banned and their members persecuted on the basis of an excessively broad legal definition of extremism.

Second, the religious illiteracy of young people that makes them susceptible to "alien" religious ideas propagated by foreign Islamist groups has been regarded as the main cause of radicalization. Importantly, this official position resonates with the understanding of the process of radicalization by the first-line practitioners in Kazakhstan: 80% of the surveyed respondents named the paucity of religious knowledge as a key factor contributing to the spread of extremism in the country, while 60% pointed out the spread of "non-traditional" religious movements as a driver of extremism (Figure 1). The second group of factors that the Kazakh public officials and first-line practitioners identified as contributors to violent radicalization include a criminal past of the offenders, economic challenges (unemployment and inequality) and social problems (the lack of life prospects, poor education). However, the government has placed considerably more emphasis on the external dimension of radicalization while underplaying the role of the domestic context in violent extremism.

Since the "alien" religious ideologies have been viewed as a source of radicalization in Kazakhstan, the government has directed the P/CVE efforts of its agencies and clergy toward improving citizens' religious knowledge. The first P/CVE program for 2013-2018 envisioned "information-explanatory" activities among the groups "vulnerable to violent ideology." Coupled with the extended surveillance of social media for extremist content, these measures were designed to shape "a consciousness that does not accept the ideas of extremism and terrorism" among the citizens of Kazakhstan. The second P/CVE program for 2018-2022 doubled down on the advocacy and
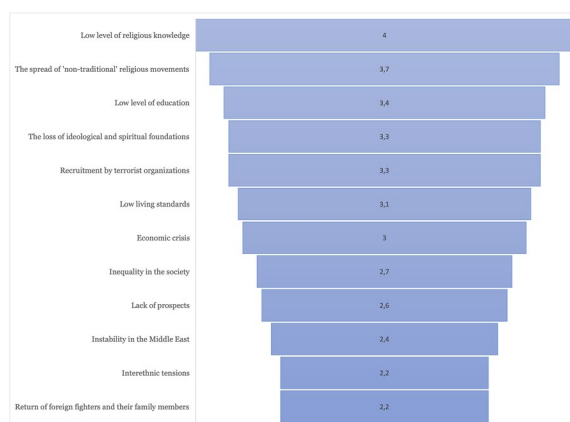

Low level of religious knowledge	4
The spread of 'non-traditional' religious movements	3,7
Low level of education	3,4
The loss of ideological and spiritual foundations	3,3
Recruitment by terrorist organizations	3,3
Low living standards	3,1
Economic crisis	3
Inequality in the society	2,7
Lack of prospects	2,6
Instability in the Middle East	2,4
Interethnic tensions	2,2
Return of foreign fighters and their family members	2,2

Figure 1. First-line responders on the drivers of radicalization in Kazakhstan. Question: In your opinion, what factors and to what extent contribute to the spread of extremism in Kazakhstan (1 – least, 5 – most)? (mean value)

counter-propaganda work with religious groups to build citizens' "immunity to radical theology," combined with the attempts of making the representatives of so-called "non-traditional religious groups" to renounce their beliefs.[41] Similarly, the first-line practitioners placed heavy emphasis on the significance of "information-explanatory" work in P/CVE measures. According to the survey respondents, the most effective P/CVE measures are those that involve activities targeting the representatives of "non-traditional religious movements" and outreach activities of information and propaganda groups. On the other hand, engaging representatives of at-risk groups into infrastructure development projects in local communities and providing them with job opportunities were rated as less effective P/CVE measures (see Figure 2).

The P/CVE experts have questioned whether the increase in religious knowledge can prevent the radicalization of the Kazakh citizens. In parts of Central Asia and the broader Middle East, the deeper engagement with the Islamic orthodoxy and praxis has not prevented the rise in religious extremism.[42] Kazakhstan's beliefs in dangerous external religious ideology as a source of radicalization are deeply rooted in the historical collective and individual understandings of religion informed by the Soviet-era politics and reinforced by the religious renaissance experiences during the first decade of Kazakhstan's independence. The Kazakhstani government's discourse of religious extremism perpetuating the dichotomy of "good" and "bad" or "local" and "foreign" Islam has its roots in the Soviet-era juxtapositions of "official" versus "parallel" religion. The former was viewed as apolitical and linked to ethnonational identification, while the latter was practiced clandestinely and deemed to be subversive to the secular nature of Kazakhstan.[43] The securitization of Islam during the "global war on terror" also contributed to the strengthening of Kazakhstan's views on the natures and sources of violent radicalization. The Kazakh government appropriated "traditional" Islam, portrayed as a constituent element of the national identity and cultural tradition, as
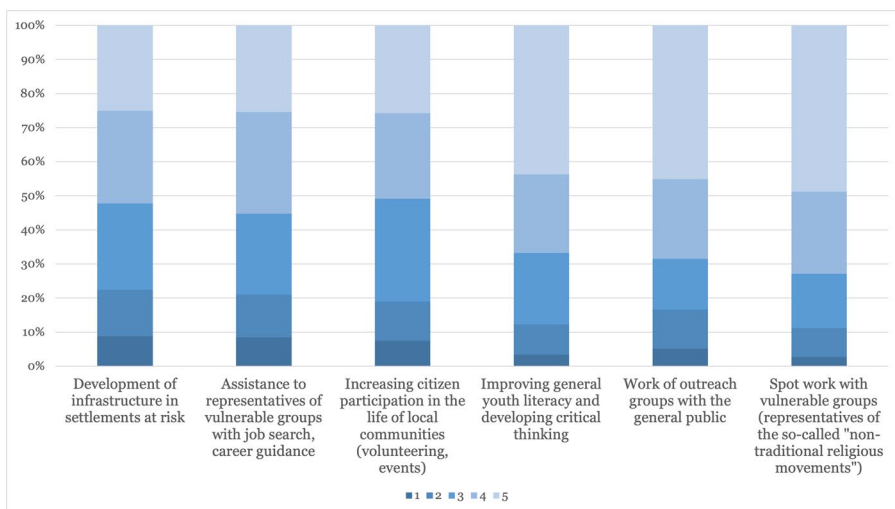

Figure 2. First-line responders on the most effective P/CVE measures. Please, rate the effectiveness of the listed activities in preventing extremism drawing on the experiences in the region where you work (1 – the least effective, 5 – the most effective), %

consistent with its identity of a "modern" state. Simultaneously, it has exploited the idea of "radical" and "foreign" Islam associated with violence and radicalization to justify extensive religious restrictions.

The Impact of Institutional Legacies on Kazakhstan's P/CVE

Despite the renewed emphasis on prophylactic and informational measures designed to prevent the spread of extremism in Kazakhstan, the republic's P/CVE has retained a heavy emphasis on hard security measures. The State Program for Combating Religious Extremism and Terrorism in Kazakhstan for 2018-2022 names the detection and suppression of religious extremism and terrorism through enhanced activities of special forces and law enforcement agencies among the three pillars of extremism counteraction. A bulk of resources allocated for the Program's implementation have been channelled toward intelligence gathering, crime investigation, border control, training police in terrorist profiling techniques, and improving the facilities and infrastructure of local law enforcement. This enduring punitive and coercive nature of Kazakhstan's P/CVE stems from the *institutional* legacies associated with the inordinate influence of national security services in the country's domestic affairs.

The National Security Committee (NSC) of Kazakhstan is the successor to the former republican Committee for State Security (KGB). Following its independence in 1991, Kazakhstan, similar to other Central Asian republics, re-concentrated control of the national and local politics and economy around security services, which became the guarantors of internal and external security of the governing regime.[44] Initially focused on surveillance of activities by political opposition and wealthy business elite, the NSC grew more powerful when it became a lead agency in counterterrorism. The NSC initiated the creation of counterterrorism training and fighting units and established operational headquarters in Astana and regional centers for implementing timely and comprehensive measures for suppressing manifestations of terrorism. In 2004, the NCS stood up its Anti-Terrorism Center responsible for the coordination of counterterrorism and counter-extremism activities of various state bodies.

Kazakhstan's P/CVE grew out of and builds on its counterterrorism framework. The State Program for Combating Religious Extremism and Terrorism in Kazakhstan for 2018-2022 was developed by the NSC, which continues coordinating and overseeing counterterrorism and P/CVE activities at both national and local levels. For example, the NSC is responsible for nine out of thirteen goals of the Program, and is listed in some kind of administrative capacity for all of them. The NSC's Anti-Terrorism Center is the national repository of all information – national and local - pertaining to the P/CVE program's implementation.[45] This information is collected through the heads of the territorial organs of the NSC, which heads serve as the deputy chairs of the local branches of the Anti-Terrorism Center.[46]

The NSC is not the only security agency responsible for the P/CVE program. It is assisted by the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Prosecutor General's Office, and the Presidential Security Service, which personnel has wide discretion in determining what qualifies as terrorism or extremism and launching prosecution on terrorism or extremism charges. In short, Kazakhstan's security services have hijacked the conversation on how to respond to the threat of terrorism and extremism,[47] pushing for broader

surveillance powers, stricter internal migration laws,[48] heavier punishments, and greater religious restrictions.

The preeminent position of security services in Kazakhstan's domestic affairs has two significant implications for P/CVE. Because of their extensive counterterrorism and counter-extremism mandates, national security agencies have been able to not only define state responses to terrorism and extremism but also shape the official discourse and popular imaginations about the nature and magnitude of the terrorist and extremist danger. While Kazakhstan has been placed in a lower risk category for terrorism by international observers,[49] three-quarters of its population report a great deal of concern with terrorism.[50] In our survey of first-line practitioners, nearly 85% of respondents considered extremism as a real problem in their region. While the government and security officials have downplayed the threat of terrorism in communications with foreign audiences (ostensibly, for attracting investments), they have amplified the message of danger at home by presenting religious radicalization and violence as a chief security threat and reporting uncovered and thwarted acts of terrorism or the spikes in crimes of terrorist and extremist nature.

The tight control of preventive P/CVE measures by Kazakhstan's security service has also resulted in the lack of transparency in and accountability for their implementation. There are no publicly available reports detailing the measures and effects of the state P/CVE program.[51] Instead, the NSC representatives have typically sent a short public statement of the trumpeted success of P/CVE at the end of each calendar year since 2013.[52]

Another implication of security services' dominance in the field of P/CVE has to do with the extension of their practices, institutional priorities, and incentives into the work on extremism counteraction. One of these practices involves a deliberate exaggeration of crime rates by the law-enforcement officials to meet the pre-set quotas. As many post-Soviet states, Kazakhstan continues relying on reported statistics of discovered crimes for evaluating law-enforcement personnel. To put it simply, each police department (and procurator's office) has a set quota for crimes that they need to investigate. These figures may be set in response to a demand signal from the government (e.g. when the President declares terrorism or drug trafficking a chief national concern and calls on law enforcement to get tough on organized crime and terrorism) and are supposed to reflect the level of threat as well as improvements in counteracting it. Facing the prospects of administrative reprimand or being sidelined in salary raises and promotions, law enforcement and security agents at all levels do their outmost to demonstrate the effectiveness of their work, including by meeting the crime quotes.[53] The legal ambiguities in definitions of terrorism and extremism in Kazakhstan and the lack of differentiation between violent and nonviolent extremism offer ample opportunities for broad interpretation and political exploitation of these terms.

The Committee for Religious Affairs of the Ministry of Information and Social Development (MISD) has been tasked with carrying out the "preventive" aspects of P/CVE in Kazakhstan. According to the Kazakh officials, radicalization stems from "the spread of radical and destructive religious ideology in the society."[54] Subsequently, the Committee for Religious Affairs coordinates various informational-explanatory activities targeting "at-risk" individuals and communities.[55] It also monitors the Internet and social

platforms for the presence of extremist information, participates in the rehabilitation of the "victims of destructive ideology," and provides religious expertise in criminal cases on charges of terrorism and extremism. The personnel of the MISD, in turn, develops all guidance and materials for information-explanatory and rehabilitation work that are used by the first-line responders throughout the country. Since the first-line responders are also under the direct supervision of the NCS through its regional offices and anti-terrorist commissions, the MISD has limited authority to monitor the implementation of preventive measures and no direct leverage over the practitioners.

The competing pressures of P/CVE securitization coming from security agencies, on one hand, and demands for more highly prescriptive information-explanatory work, on the other, have resulted in considerable disagreements among the first-line practitioners over the effectiveness of different approaches to counter radicalization. Asked to comment on the ways to improve the effectiveness of P/CVE in their regions, some first-line practitioners suggested criminalizing the "destructive religious movements" and extending sanctions against their representatives. Others have advocated for the respect of freedom of conscience in Kazakhstan and cautioned against the "oppression of believers." While the growing number of the first-line practitioners have come to realize that they cannot "persuade" representatives of vulnerable groups out of radicalization, the top-down and highly prescriptive approach to prevention[56] wrapped in the dominant ideas about the role of religious ideology in radicalization in Kazakhstan continues limiting their work.

Discussion and Conclusions

P/CVE is premised on the idea that violent extremism cannot be countered exclusively with intelligence, law enforcement, and military means. Effective P/CVE requires actions on multiple fronts, including the provision of educational and economic opportunities, measures to empower youth and other marginalized constituencies, comprehensive community-based work, and more. Governments cannot deliver on this wide-ranging agenda alone and must involve civil society and community actors.[57] Although, states continue to place different values on P/CVE, many have developed strategies to prevent and counter violent extremism to complement existing counterterrorism agendas.[58]

Much of the existing scholarship on P/CVE focuses on the evaluation, i.e. assessment of the implementation and effects of P/CVE measures. And, while we still lack compelling evidence-based conclusions on which approaches work and which don't, there has been some convergence toward public diplomacy and online interventions to remove extremist content, outreach, dialogue, and capacity-building approaches in local communities, early intervention measures to identify at-risk populations, and CVE training for law enforcement, social workers, educators, and health professionals.[59] At the same time, excessive securitization of P/CVE issues has become a widespread problem. Definitional ambiguities and scope issues continue to limit the P/CVE work. Human rights groups have criticized P/CVE initiatives for their infringements on civil and political freedoms and their propensity to prop up discrimination against certain religious and belief communities.[60]

Our study sought to broaden the P/CVE assessment from the "what" and "how" questions (What do countries do in the P/CVE area? How do they define and

implement P/CVE measures?) to the underlying "why" issues (Why do countries choose to define and approach P/CVE in certain ways?). Our position is that a better understanding of the drivers of countries' P/CVE is important for deriving more meaningful and actionable recommendations about changes in P/CVE measures for increasing their effectiveness.

Toward this goal of explaining states' P/CVE policies and programs, we put forth a general framework emphasizing the influence of *interests*, *ideas*, and *institutions* (3-Is). Jointly, these concepts direct our attention to pragmatic and ideational aspects of policymaking as well as the countries' institutional legacies. We applied the 3-Is framework to the case of Kazakhstan to illuminate and explain certain highly visible aspects of its P/CVE program.

While Kazakhstan is positioning itself as one of the champions of the movement toward a world free of terrorism, and is politically interested in this fight (by providing a platform for Syrian peace negotiations, organizing the return of citizens from territories formerly occupied by the ISIS camps, etc.), its own P/CVE policy retains controversial elements and is, arguably, ineffective. Kazakhstan's P/CVE blurs the lines between counterterrorism and countering violent extremism, confounds extremism with "foreign" and "radical" Islam, conflates radicalization with violence, and contains a narrow range of alternative narratives and "soft" measures against violent extremism. We attribute these aspects of Kazakhstan's P/CVE to the outsized role of security services in formulating, implementing, and overseeing the P/CVE measures, enduring (if simplistic) beliefs about the "real" (authentic) and "foreign" (dangerous) Islam in Kazakhstan, and the regime's interests in political stability that is necessary for its survival. In addition, the superimposed extensive counterterrorism measures pushed for adoption by various global actors, including the U.S. and Russia, coupled with attempts to appear "progressive" in the eyes of Western partners, have left the authorities of Kazakhstan with little room to manoeuvre.

The ideas offered as alternative narratives to the notion of religiously motivated violent extremism remain on the margins of Kazakhstan's society. These alternatives come from either the general narratives, such as patriotism and multiculturalism, or specific ideologies such as the Hanafi madhhab of Islam, as interpreted by the "official" Kazakh clergy. Unfortunately, over the years of the existence of the P/CVE policy, civil society groups and activists have not been invited to the dialogue over P/CVE measures, although they could have popularized these narratives.

The institutional crisis of the P/CVE policy is well illustrated by the events of January 2022 (also known as the "Bloody January"). The degradation and corruption of power structures, combined with the accumulated problems of political transition,[61] led to the use of "sleeper cells" for political struggle, or even their independent involvement in such.[62] With enough connections and resources, they were able to quickly mobilize in the wake of the socio-economic demands of the protesters and the idea of confronting the political status quo in the country.

Kazakhstan is not along in securitizing the P/CVE to limit space for political and religious freedom and suppress opposition to the regime. Other countries have also manipulated the P/CVE discourse and relied on the shaky conceptual foundations of preventive measures divorced from the evidence of the drivers of radicalization. Affecting these deeply entrenched interests and conceptions of threat is challenging.

Successful P/CVE programs inevitably push against politically sensitive areas that many international partners seek to avoid. However, the failure to acknowledge and address these interest-based, ideational, and institutional drivers runs the risk of proliferation in ineffective and counterproductive P/CVE policies.

Notes

1. Hal Brands and Michael O'Hanlon, "America Failed Its Way to Counterterrorism Success," *Foreign Affairs*, 12 August 2021, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/2021-08-12/america-failed-its-way-counterterrorism-success

2. We chose to use "P/CVE" as an umbrella term encompassing both prevention- and intervention-oriented initiatives. Although, CVE and PVE are often used interchangeably in the scholarship and practice, we recognize the critique levied against the conflation of preventive approaches that aim to preclude individuals from violent radicalization and de-radicalization approaches applied to individuals who have been radicalized to the point of using violence (see, for example, Katherine E. Brown, "Gender and Counter-Radicalization: Women and Emerging Counter-Terror Measures." In *Gender, National Security, and Counter-Terrorism*: *Human Rights Perspectives*, edited by Margaret L. Satterthwaite and Jayne C. Huckerby, Routledge, 2013, pp. 36–59; Lynn Davies, "Security, Extremism and Education: Safeguarding or Surveillance?" *British Journal of Educational Studies* 64, no. 1 (2016): 1–19).

3. Owen Frazer and Christian Nünlist, "The Concept of Countering Violence Extremism," *CSS Analyses in Security Policy*, No. 183, December 2015, http://www.css.ethz.ch/content/dam/ethz/special-interest/gess/cis/center-for-securities-studies/pdfs/CSSAnalyse183-EN.pdf. Today, P/CVE repertoire includes a range of methods ranging from targeted ideological interventions to messaging, counter-messaging, and PR campaigns, to capacity building and development aid that are used by the government and non-government actors at the local, national, and international levels (Daniel Koehler and Verena Fiebig, "Knowing What to Do: Academic and Practitioner Understanding of How to Counter Violence Radicalization," *Perspectives on Terrorism*, Vol. 13, No. 3 (June 2019), pp. 44–62.

4. Sebastien Feve and David Dew, "National Strategies to Prevent and Counter Violent Extremism: An Independent Review," Washington, D.C.: Global Center on Cooperative Security (2019), https://www.globalcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/GCCS-2019-National-Strategies-Prevent-Counter-Violent-Extremism-Independent-Review.pdf

5. The expanded role of the UN in P/CVE has resulted in a surge of countries developing P/CVE national action plans or strategies inspired by the former UN Secretary-General's Plan of Action on Preventing Violent extremism launched in December 2015 (United Nations General Assembly, "Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism," Seventieth Session, 24 December 2015, A/70/674, https://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/70/6740). Through this plan of action, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon called on all member states to adopt national strategies on preventing and countering violent extremism to facilitate a more comprehensive implementation of the United Nationals Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

6. See, for example, Sebastien Feve and David Dew, "National Strategies to Prevent and Counter Violent Extremism: An Independent Review."

7. Ibid.

8. Eric Rosand and Emily Winterbotham, "Current Global CVE Agenda is a Mixed Bag, But Don't Throw It Out," *Just Security*, 10 October, 2018, https://www.justsecurity.org/60991/current-global-cve-agenda-mixed-bag-dont-throw/

9. At the local level, the main P/CVE work in Kazakhstan is carried out by the Departments of Religious Affairs of the regional and local akimats (municipalities). The P/CVE personnel are the state (municipal) employees who interact directly with the general audience as part of their preventive and rehabilitation activities.

10. James E. Anderson, *Public Policymaking: An Introduction* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2000, 4th edition); Sara Rinfret, Denise Scheberie, and Michelle Pautz, *Public Policy: A Concise Introduction* (SAGE Publication, 2018), pp. 19–44.

11. Bryan D. Jones, "Bounded Rationality and Political Science: Lessons from Public Administration and Public Policy," *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 13, no. 4 (2003): 395–412; Bryan D. Jones and Frank R. Baumgartner, *The Politics of Attention: How Government Prioritizes Problems* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

12. Thomas Renard, "Counter-Terrorism as a Public Policy: Theoretical Insights and Broader Reflections on the State of Counter-Terrorism Research," *Perspectives on Terrorism*, Vol. 14, Issue 4 (2021), pp. 2–10.

13. Robert C. Luskin, "Explaining Political Sophistication," Political Behavior Vol. 12 (1990), pp. 331–61; Markus Prior, "You've Either Got It or You Don't? The Stability of Political Interest Over the Life Cycle," Vol. 72, No. 3 (2010), pp. 747–66.

14. Thomas Renard, "Counter-Terrorism as a Public Policy."

15. Susan B. Glasser, "Review May Shift Terror Policies: U.S. Is Expected to Look Beyond Al Qaeda," *Washington Post*, May 29, 2005, P A01.

16. The Obama White House was also motived to break from the alienating "war on terror" of the Bush era (David H. Ucko, "Preventing Violent Extremism Through the United Nations: The Rise and Fall of a Good Idea," *International Affairs*, Vol. 94, Issue 2 (2018), pp. 251–70. See also Jeffrey H. Michaels, *The Discourse Trap and the US Military: From the War on Terror to the Surge*, 1st ed. (New York and Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), pp. 37–9.

17. Peter Bergen, Albert Ford, Alyssa Sims, and David Sterman, "What is the Threat to the United States Today?" in *Terrorism in America after 9/11. Project of the New America.* Available at: https://www.newamerica.org/in-depth/terrorism-in-america/what-threat-united-states-today/; Maura Conway, Ryan Scrivens, Logan Macnair, "Right-Wing Extremists' Persistent Online Presence: History and Contemporary Trends," *Policy Brief,* International Centre for Counter-Terrorism, The Hague, October 2019, https://icct.nl/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Right-Wing-Extremists-Persistent-Online-Presence.pdf.

18. David H. Ucko, "Preventing Violent Extremism Through the United Nations."

19. An audit of the Department of State (DoS) CVE programs conducted in 2019 found that more than 40 percent of the DoS-administered CVE grants and cooperating agreements reviewed for the audit either did not align with or support the Department's CVE goals and objectives (Office of Inspector General, United States Department of State, "Audit of the Department of State Implementation of Policies Intended to Counter Violent Extremism," June 2019, https://www.oversight.gov/sites/default/files/oig-reports/AUD-MERO-19-27.pdf).

20. See, for example, Department of State & USAID Joint Strategy on Countering Violent Extremism, May 2016, https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1866/FINAL%20–%20State%20and%20USAID%20Joint%20Strategy%20on%20Countering%20Violent%20Extremism%20%28May%202016%29.pdf, USAID, "Policy for Countering Violent Extremism through Development Assistance," April 2020, https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/USAID-publication-Policy-for-Countering-Violent-Extremism-through-Development-Assistance-April2020.pdf.

21. An element of policy emulation has always been present in P/CVE. The American CVE approach has been influenced by the British PREVENT policy. The British program was influenced by the Dutch PVE initiatives, while the US close engagement with the UN shaped the intellectual foundations of Ban Ki-moon's Plan of Action (David H. Ucko, "Preventing Violent Extremism Through the United Nations."

22. Researchers, for example, have acknowledged the role of these factors in the governments' selection and prioritization of evidence to inform their policy priorities. One of the critiques of the national P/CVE programs has been that the governments tend to downplay the genuine but politically sensitive contradictions – predatory state behavior, corruption, and human rights abuses – as drivers of extremism in favor of less controversial issues

such as developmental and economically grounded initiatives (Sebastien Feve and David Dew, "National Strategies to Prevent and Counter Violent Extremism: An Independent Review").

23. Pew Research Center, "Religious Composition by Country, 2010–2050," 2 April 2015, https://www.pewforum.org/2015/04/02/religious-projection-table/.

24. Ksenia Bondal, "Central Asian Countries Assess Vulnerability to Terrorist Infiltration," *Caravanserai*, 22 November 2021, https://central.asia-news.com/en_GB/articles/cnmi_ca/features/2021/11/22/feature-01.

25. U.S. Department of State. "Country Report on Terrorism 2020: Kazakhstan," https://www.state.gov/reports/country-reports-on-terrorism-2020/kazakhstan/. See also United Nations General Assembly, "A/HRC/28/66/Add. Report of the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief," Heiner Bielefeldt, 2015.

26. Mariya Y. Omelicheva, Counterterrorism Policies in Central Asia (Routledge, 2011).

27. According to the Global Terrorism database, 9 terrorist incidents took place in Kazakhstan in 2011–2012. These incidents resulted in 14 fatalities and 5 injured (START (National Consortium for the Study of Responses to Terrorism). *Global Terrorism Database* (GTD), University of Maryland, 2021. https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd).

28. Researchers have questioned the religious nature of several incidents in 2011–2012 (see, for example, Birgit Brauer, "Is Kazakhstan Threatened by Islamic Terrorists?" Eurasia Daily Monitor, Vol. 8, Issue 209, 11 November 2011, https://jamestown.org/program/is-kazakhstan-threatened-by-islamic-terrorists/#.V63qw1dlv-; Zhulduz Baizakova and Roger N. McDermott, "Reassessing the Barriers to Islamic Radicalization in Kazakhstan," U.S. Army War College, Strategic Studies Institute, July 2015, https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/pdfs/ADA621437.pdf; Mariya Y. Omelicheva and Lawrence P. Markowitz, *Webs of Corruption: Trafficking and Terrorism in Central Asia* (Columbia University Press, 2020)).

29. Address by the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Leader of the Nation, N. Nazarbayev "Strategy Kazakhstan-2050": New Political Course of the Established State, 14 December 2012. https://www.akorda.kz/en/addresses/addresses_of_president/address-by-the-president-of-the-republic-of-kazakhstan-leader-of-the-nation-nnazarbayev-strategy-kazakhstan-2050-new-political-course-of-the-established-state

30. According to researchers, this was a turning point of PVE policy in Kazakhstan; the authorities recognized the existence of grassroot extremism in Kazakhstan and started to develop measures aimed to address it (see, for example, Edward Lemon, "Talking Up Terrorism in Central Asia", *Kennan Cable*, No. 38, December 2018, https://www.wilson-center.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/publication/kennan_cable_38.pdf; Dina Sharipova and Serik Beissembayev, "Causes of Violent Extremism in Central Asia: The Case of Kazakhstan", *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 28 February 2021. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/1057610X.2021.1872163.

31. Marlene Laruelle, "The Three Discursive Paradigms of State Identity in Kazakhstan. Kazakhness, Kazakhstannes and Transnationalism," in *Nationalism and Identity Construction in Central Asia. Dimensions, Dynamics and Directions, ed. Mariya Y. Omelicheva (*Lanham: Lexington Books), pp. 1–20; Mariya Y. Omelicheva, Authoritarian Legitimation: Assessing Discourses of Legitimacy in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, *Central Asian Survey*, 2016 15: 481–500; Edward Schatz, "Access by Accident: Legitimacy Claims and Democracy Promotion in Authoritarian Central Asia," *International Political Science Review* Vol. 27, No. 3 (2006) pp. 263–84.

32. Janusz Bugajski, Margarita Assenova, and Richard Weitz, "Kazakhstan's OSCE Chairmanship 2010: Final Report," Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic & International Studies, January 2011. https://csis-website-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/legacy_files/files/publication/110125_Bugajski_KazakhstanOSCE_Web.pdf.

33. Order of the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan of 15 March 2018, no. 124 About the approval of the State program on counteraction to religious extremism and terrorism in the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2018–2022. https://cis-legislation.com/document.fwx?rgn=105085.

34. Consistent with the image-based aspirations, during its chairmanship of the United Nations Security Council in 2018, Kazakhstan put forth a proposal to establish the Code of Conduct toward Achieving a World Free of Terrorism by the UN Centenary in 2045.

35. Human Rights Watch, "Kazakhstan: Crackdown on Government Critics", 7 July 2018, https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/07/07/kazakhstan-crackdown-government-critics

36. Groups like Tablighi Jamaat and Hizbut Tahrir are outright banned in Central Asia except for Kyrgyzstan; the first is still legal there; the second was forbidden only in 2020 (see, for example, Edward Lemon, Samuel Doveri Vesterbye and Bradley Jardine, "Emerging Forms of Islamic Civil Society in Central Asia", Oxus Society, Dialogue Snapshot Report, May 2021. https://oxussociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/emerging-forms-of-islamic-civil-society-in-central-asia.pdf.

37. Noah Tucker, "Terrorism without God: Reconsidering Radicalization and Counter-Radicalization Methods in Central Asia," George Washington University, Central Asia Program, CAP papers, no. 225, September 2019. https://centralasiaprogram.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/CAP-paper-225-September-2019-1.pdf.

38. Sarah Lain, "Strategies for Countering Terrorism and Extremism in Central Asia."

39. Euronews, "Kazakhstan Crisis: President Claims Violent Protests Were 'Attempted Coup d'etat'", 10 January 2022, https://www.euronews.com/2022/01/10/kazakhstan-crisis-president-claims-violent-protests-were-attempted-coup-d-etat: the NSC reported that 2 extremist cells were neutralized in Almaty, one of them was led by a foreign citizen, "On neutralization of two extremist cells", 10 January 2022, https://www.gov.kz/memleket/entities/knb/press/news/details/309779?lang=ru

40. Non-traditional Christian groups, such as Jehovah Witnesses, are also persecuted.

41. The returnees from Syria and Iraq were subjected to so-called "theological correction" as part of the 2019 Zhussan and Rusafa operations (Yuliya Shapoval and Madina Bekmaganbetova, "Hijra to 'Islamic State' through the Female Narratives: The Case of Kazakhstan", *Gosudarstvo, religiia, tserkov' v Rossii i za rubezhom*. 2021, Vol. 39, Issue 3, p. 289–315). See also Counterterrorist Committee, "Since the beginning of the year, 1,134 victims of destructive religious movements have been rehabilitated", 31 July 2017, http://ctc-rk.kz/с-начала-года-реабилитировано-1134-постр.html.

42. Serik Beissembayev, "Religious Extremism in Kazakhstan: From Criminal Networks to Jihad," The Central Asia Fellowship Papers, No. 15, 2 February 2016, https://pdfslide.net/documents/the-central-the-central-asia-fellowship-papers-a-the-central-asia-fellowship.html.

43. Mariya Y. Omelicheva, Islam in Kazakhstan: A Survey of Trends and Conditions for Securitization, *Central Asia Survey* Vol. 30, No. (2011), pp. 243–56.

44. See, for example, the page of the National Security Committee of the Republic of Kazakhstan dedicated to countering Terrorism: https://www.gov.kz/memleket/entities/knb/activities/146?lang=en.

45. Jessica N. Trisko, "Coping with the Islamist Threat: Analysing Repression in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan," *Central Asian Survey*. Vol. 24, No. 4, December 2005, p. 380.

46. Stephane Lefebvre and Roger N. McDermott, "Russia and the Intelligence Services of Central Asia," International *Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence*, Vol. 21, Issue 2 (2008), pp. 251–301.

47. Reid Standish, "'Our Future Will Be Violent Extremism", *Foreign Policy*, August 1, 2017, https://foreignpolicy.com/2017/08/01/central-asia-kazakhstan-eurasia-terrorism-extremism-isis-al-qaeda/

48. Aktan Rysaliev, "Kazakhstan: Registration Law Sparks Widespread Indignation," Eurasianet, 6 January 2017, https://eurasianet.org/kazakhstan-registration-law-sparks-widespread-indignation.

49. The Global Counter-Terrorism Index ranks Kazakhstan in a lower risk category for terrorism (2.23), with an average of 1.21 risk from 2002–2017 (as reported in the Preliminary Findings of the Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms While Countering Terrorism on Her Visit to Kazakhstan, May 2019, https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=24637).

50. According to the World Value survey, in 2011, 75.6% of all surveyed respondents in Kazakhstan reported significant or a great deal of concern with terrorism. In 2019, this figure stood at 75.2%. https://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSDocumentationWV3.jsp

51. Except for audit reports published at the websites of several akimats (see, for example, Revision Commission, Audit report "Assessment of the implementation of the activities of the State Program on countering religious extremism and terrorism in the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2013–2017 in the city of Astana", 2017, https://rkastana.gov.kz/source/uploads/религия%20.pdf.

52. UN General Assembly, "Report of the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief", A/73/45410, 4 September 2018, https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Religion/A_73_45410.docx.

53. Zhaniya Turlubekova, "Legacies, Bribes or Culture? Prosecuting Large-Scale Drug-Trafficking in Kazakhstan", Nazarbayev University, 2016, https://nur.nu.edu.kz/bitstream/handle/123456789/1476/Turlubekova%20Thesis%20NUR.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y.

54. The Ministry of Information and Social Development of the Republic of Kazakhstan, "The number of publications on anti-extremism in the field of religion has increased almost 2 times", 21 December 2021, https://www.gov.kz/memleket/entities/din/press/news/details/304237?lang=en.

55. Typically, these groups consist of religious leaders, theologists, lawyers, psychologists, domestic leaders - aqsaqals, representatives of local authorities, etc. See, for example, the list of participants of such a group in Nur-Sultan: https://elorda-din.kz/ru/irg/sostav-irg.html

56. Three-quarters of the surveyed first-line practitioners underscored how the top-down goal setting and workflow methods have limited their work. The respondents lack peer-to-peer experiences sharing and insufficient independent analytical work.

57. Owen Frazer and Christian Nünlist, "The Concept of Countering Violence Extremism". See also Peter Romaniuk, "Does CVE Work? Lessons Learned from the Global Effort to Counter Violence Extremism," Global Center on Cooperative Security, September 2015, https://www.globalcenter.org/publications/does-cve-work-lessons-learned-from-the-global-effort-to-counter-violent-extremism/.

58. Sebastien Feve and David Dew, "National Strategies to Prevent and Counter Violent Extremism: An Independent Review."

59. Peter Romaniuk, "Does CVE Work? Lessons Learned from the Global Effort to Counter Violence Extremism," p. 4.

60. UN General Assembly, "Report of the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief", A/73/45410, 4 September 2018, https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Religion/A_73_45410.docx.

61. Diana T. Kudaibergenova & Marlene Laruelle (2022): Making sense of the January 2022 protests in Kazakhstan: failing legitimacy, culture of protests, and elite readjustments, Post-Soviet Affairs, DOI: 10.1080/1060586X.2022.2077060

62. At the time of writing, the groups involved in the violence in Almaty and other cities have not been officially identified, so their motives remain unknown. However, in the reports of the authorities, they are called "terrorists" - it was to combat them that the CSTO peacekeeping troops were brought into the country.

Disclosure Statement