

A. Kuzembayuly<sup>1</sup>, Ye. Abil<sup>2\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Akhmet Baitursynuly Kostanay Regional University, Kostanay, Kazakhstan;*

<sup>2</sup>*B. Beissenov Karaganda Academy under the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Karaganda, Kazakhstan  
(E-mail: [topai240345@mail.ru](mailto:topai240345@mail.ru); [yerkinabil@gmail.com](mailto:yerkinabil@gmail.com))*

## Kazakhstan and the USSR: discussions on empire

The problem of understanding the nature of the Soviet power in general and relations “Center-Periphery” in particular is one of the key problems in the process of formation of historical consciousness of the Kazakh society at the present stage. There is a long history of discussion of this problem in the research literature. The discussion is reduced to two questions — whether the USSR was an empire and, if it was, whether it was a classical empire and Kazakhstan was a classical colony. The analysis of the results of the discussion has shown that the Western research tradition is dominated by the viewpoint of the imperial character of the Soviet Union. In modern Russian political and historical science, there are both concepts that completely deny the imperial character of the USSR, and those that consider the USSR as an “empire of a new type”, not based on unequal relations “Center-Periphery”. Kazakhstan’s research tradition is still in its infancy. However, it can be argued that the Bolshevik/Communist Party leadership pursued a classic imperial policy in Kazakhstan and other peripheral territories of the USSR, characterized by subordinating the interests of the regions to the interests of the imperial military-political elite, ignoring the formal sovereignty of the union and autonomous republics, pursuing an active colonization policy to the detriment of the interests of the local population, and cultural and linguistic assimilation.

*Keywords:* Soviet Union, Kazakhstan, empire, colony, colonial policy, historiography, post-colonialism, decolonization, historical consciousness.

### Introduction

In 1992, one of the authors of this article, A. Kuzembayuly, preparing the first university textbook on the history of Kazakhstan in independent Kazakhstan, called one of the periods of national history “colonial”, including not only the time when Kazakhs were part of the Russian Empire, but also the Soviet period [1; 90]. This thesis did not cause much discussion in the academic community of Kazakhstan, moreover, the textbook was presented as a doctoral dissertation “Conceptual rethinking of the history of pre-revolutionary Kazakhstan”, successfully defended in April 1993 at the Ch. Valikhanov Institute of History and Ethnology. In 1998 A. Kuzembayuly published the 3rd edition of his textbook, significantly expanding it to include the period after 1917 [2]. An innovation in the post-Soviet Kazakh historiography was the thesis about the fundamental identity of the colonial policy of pre-revolutionary Russia and the Soviet state in Kazakhstan [2; 313]. In 1999, this thesis was voiced by N. Nazarbayev in his work “In the flow of history”: “The question lies not in stating obvious truths, such as the fact that Tsarist Russia was not just a prison of peoples, nor that the USSR was not a paradise. The question is different — in the genetic similarity of both periods of national history” [3; 15].

The relevance of the research topic is conditioned by the active process of nation-building in independent Kazakhstan. The emerging national consciousness determined the surge of interest not only to historical issues in general, but also to the Soviet period of history. Decolonization of public consciousness and post-colonial discourse became a trend in socio-political thought. That is why when considering the formation of historical memory and historical consciousness at the present stage it is impossible to do without studying the problem of the imperial character of the USSR.

The purpose of this study is to analyze the existing views on the imperial character of the USSR and center-periphery relations in relation to Kazakhstan. This leads to the following research objectives: a) to identify the main theories and concepts considering the imperial character of the USSR; b) to analyze comparatively the existing concepts considering the imperial character of the USSR.

### Materials and Research Methods

The historiographical nature of the article has determined the use of the following research methods to analyze the problem under study. First, it is a historical-comparative method based on the identification of common and specific features in the existing concepts of Soviet history. We see a difference in the conceptu-

\*Corresponding author’s e-mail: [yerkinabil@gmail.com](mailto:yerkinabil@gmail.com)

alization of relations between Kazakhstan as a periphery and the USSR as an empire in the works of Russian, Kazakhstani and “Western” researchers. The latter are understood as American and Western European authors. In the “Western” historiography itself, several concepts have emerged, including the “Affirmative Action Empire”.

Secondly, it is a historical-typological method, which consists in singling out separate groups of studies based on their similar features. A. Filippov, analyzing the perception of the thesis “the USSR is an empire”, identified four variants of “rhetorical figures” possible from the point of view of formal logic: “Empire is bad, the Soviet Union is not an empire”, “Empire is bad, the Soviet Union is an empire”, “Empire is good, the Soviet Union is an empire”, “Empire is good, the Soviet Union is not an empire” [4; 90]. It is on these theses that the qualitative assessments of all studies on this topic are based. Therefore, we distinguish the following groups of studies:

1. Studies denying the imperial character of the USSR and the colonial status of Kazakhstan;
2. Studies recognizing the imperial character of the USSR, but denying the colonial character of Kazakhstan (Empire of a new type, People’s Empire, etc.);
3. Studies recognizing the imperial character of the USSR and the colonial character of Kazakhstan.

#### *Discussion and Results*

It should be noted that the colonial nature of the Soviet statehood in the national peripheries was emphasized by researchers almost throughout the entire period of the existence of the USSR and after its collapse. It is enough to recall the famous work of G. Safarov “Colonial Revolution” [5]. A typical representative of the Bolsheviks, the author bitterly wrote that in Turkestan “the proletarian dictatorship...from the very first steps took on a typical colonialist appearance” [5; 110]. A detailed picture of the colonial nature of Soviet power in Kazakhstan and the Central Asian republics was given in the book by M. Chokai [6].

All the studies published in the USSR during the Soviet period, for obvious reasons, denied the unequal nature of center-periphery relations in the Soviet Union. All these works were strictly aligned with the official party line on this issue and were devoted to the apologetics of the Soviet model of nation-building [7-8]. The official party version is represented by the studies of M. Sapargaliev on the emergence of Soviet autonomy in Kazakhstan [9], V.K. Savosko, devoted to the issues of transformation of Kazakhstan from an autonomy into a union republic [10]. In 1951, K.F. Kotov’s thesis “Korenization of the Soviet state apparatus in Kazakhstan (1920–1936)” was defended as a candidate thesis [11]. In the 50s–80s, apologetics of the Soviet model of nation-building was contained in the works of A. Gordienko, S. Baishev, S. Zimanov, I. Reitor, D. Zlatopolsky, N. Masanov, B. Suzhikov, M. Suzhikov [12–19].

Our tasks do not include a complete historiographical analysis of the problem, but we note that the works of the Soviet period, while denying unequal relations between the center and the periphery, reproduced all the civilizational stamps of the Russian Empire. First, the concept of voluntariness of Kazakhstan’s accession to Russia was gradually established. Secondly, after long discussions, the concept of the absolute benefit of joining Russia for the Kazakh people was established [20]. To other civilizational factors in pre-revolutionary Russian literature, in Soviet times the thesis of joint revolutionary struggle with the Russian people was added. “The Kazakh people know well that the blossoming of its national in form and socialist in content culture would not have been possible without the victory of the proletarian revolution in October 1917, without the constant help of the great Russian people at all stages of socialist construction” — stated in the book by A. Nurkanov [21; 115].

In the post-Soviet period, Russian and Kazakh historical sciences began to develop in opposite directions. The anti-imperial mainstream in modern Kazakhstani historiography was set by academician M.K. Kozybaev, who reduced the main provisions of the Soviet national policy to the restriction of the right of nations to self-determination. Kozybaev, who reduced the main provisions of the Soviet national policy to the restriction of the right of nations to self-determination, “creation of “puppet” national formations” and centralization of power over the peoples of the country [21; 158, 22; 23]. If in Kazakhstan the Russian Empire was unambiguously interpreted as a classical empire and the discussion was only about the nature of the processes of inclusion of Kazakhstan in its composition, other approaches in Russia gradually prevailed. The dominant thesis in modern Russian historical science is the fundamental difference between the Russian Empire and the colonial empires of Europe, the aspiration of the Russian authorities to social and legal equality of all peoples within the empire [24; 31]. This apologetics of the colonial Russian imperial model is caused by a political order and is designed to ideologically justify the attempts to revive the imperial model by the

modern political leadership of Russia. As P. Marchenya writes, imperial consciousness remains an important mental characteristic of the majority of the population of the modern Russian Federation [25; 117].

Kazakh and Russian authors have not found consensus on the issue of the imperial character of the Soviet Union either. For the last three decades, the image of the USSR as the “last empire” has firmly entered the academic and public discourse, postcolonial studies have long perceived the post-Soviet space as a legitimate sphere of their scientific interests, and even those authors who emphasize the uniqueness of the Soviet experience in solving the “national question”, as a rule, still cannot do without the appropriate vocabulary [26; 62]. The beginning of this tradition was laid by the famous Soviet orientalist, Professor A. Prazauskas in his article “CIS as a postcolonial space” [27]. Having defined the USSR as a colonial empire, the author defined the CIS as a form of influence of the former metropolis on the former colonies by analogy with the British Commonwealth [28].

Moreover, there are works that present the USSR as a new type of empire — a “people’s superpower”. In A. Golenkov’s semi-publicistic study, after the standard set of Soviet stamps about industrialization, collectivization and lack of repression, modern stamps about Western Russophobia, Zionists, Freemasons and the civilizing role of the Russian people are added. The author concludes that the imperial interests of the USSR corresponded to the interests of the broadest segments of the population and the Soviet Union was a truly popular empire [29]. S.V. Lurie defines empire as an open dynamic heterogeneous system in a state of unstable equilibrium, as a political and cultural phenomenon that requires a neutral assessment, taking into account various aspects of imperial construction and imperial practice [30; 16–20]. He suggests using the concept of “empire” without value judgments, as a category describing a certain form of a multinational state that used various forms and methods of integration of the eastern regions into Russia.

P. Marchenya considers the empire as a historically conditioned system of interaction between the people and the government in Russia [25; 118]. He defines an empire as a state that has realized its role in world history and purposefully fulfills it as a mission that is above local (“just state”) interests. The historical existence of any empire is based on the idea of serving the Imperative that unites the peoples inhabiting it for the realization of good and opposition to evil, he believes, giving the phenomenon of empire a socio-philosophical meaning [25; 128].

The rejection of analogies between the “classical empires” and the USSR is based on the imaginary difference between them. In this case, the authors resort to two logical tricks. First, for the comparison, a speculative model of the “classical empire” is taken, which did not exist in reality. This ignores the fact that all empires had significant differences in the relationship between the center and the periphery, as well as in the state and legal structure. Thus, A. Motyl compares “classical empires” to a wheel without a rim, the interaction between different territories is built there exclusively through the imperial core, and the individual parts of the periphery practically do not contact with each other, and therefore do not have a common identity [31; 13]. Accordingly, the USSR, where there was an economic connection between the republics and the formation of the all-union “Soviet” identity, cannot be classified as an empire [26; 64–65].

However, the weak point in this reasoning is the characterization of the “classical empire”, i.e., a speculative model that did not exist anywhere in its pure form. In the same British Empire, even before economic globalization, colonized India supplied opium to China via colonized Hong Kong. The North American colonies successfully traded not only with the metropolis but also among themselves. The British colonies also exchanged labor, which is how a fairly significant Indian diaspora was formed in South Africa. The Imperial Conference of 1930 was convened to regularize intra-imperial trade, not only between the dominions and the metropolis, but also between the dominions [32]. In addition, we should not forget the simple fact that the European empires collapsed at the dawn of the industrial era, in the era of trade protectionism, while the USSR existed already in the era of increasing globalization, which could not but affect the specificity of economic relations between the Soviet republics.

Secondly, the obvious facts of manifestations of this inequality (Russification, colonization, economic exploitation) in relation to other empires are interpreted as colonial policy, and in relation to the USSR — as natural processes generated by existence in a single state. Thus, D. Letnyakov, says that “it would be strange to deny that in the Soviet Union there was a tendency to assimilating pressure of Russian on other languages, as well as the problem of the dominance of Russians in the highest positions in the KGB, army, as well as at the level of party leadership, which could create in the national republics the feeling of a colonial situation” [26; 66]. However, he goes on to cite rather strange theses that in addition to Russification, correctly called by the author from the political point of view: “Assimilating pressure of the Russian language”, there were Tajik-Uzbek and Abkhaz-Georgian contradictions. “It turns out that for some ethnic groups the situation of

imperial domination was much more pronounced in their relations with republican rather than Moscow authorities. Or, as in the case of Tajikistan, the neighboring republic was seen as the main “oppressor” — he states and, on this basis, excludes the language issue from the discussion of the imperial character of the USSR [26; 67]. But these facts do not cancel the imperial character of relations. Similar facts of “stepwise discrimination” can be found in the history of any European empire. The same Britain supported in India the Hindi, who formed the basis of the local colonial apparatus, as a relatively privileged ethnic group, while turning a blind eye to discrimination by the Hindi against other groups on both religious (Muslims) and ethnic grounds, which caused greater loyalty of the same Muslims to the British crown [33].

Reflecting on the essence of the USSR, European and American authors recognize it more as an empire. The dominant form of understanding the state is the national vision, with the Western nation-state serving as an example. Consequently, in the eyes of Western researchers, the USSR was more of an empire than a nation-state [34; 48]. According to historian Stephen Howe, an empire is characterized by the fact that it consists of a center and a subordinate periphery, and these peripheral areas are usually conquered [35; 30]. Jane Burbank believes that the USSR appears as a modernized empire, an empire pushed to the limit of its fundamental possibilities, and it is in reaching the limit of functionality of the imperial form that the Soviet Union collapsed [36].

The author of the classic work on the comparative analysis of imperial political systems, D. Lieven, also believes that the USSR is one of the varieties of traditional modern European imperialism [37; 501]. He believes that Soviet history fits perfectly into the framework of modern European colonialism, “a process in which Europeans ruled much of the rest of the world in the name of modernization processes developed in Europe” [37; 499–500]. At the same time, analyzing the modernization policy of the USSR, D. Lieven believed that modernization “in the Soviet way” was carried out much more recklessly and ill-considered than in European empires, which is partly why its environmental consequences were terrible [37; 500]. “Throughout the years of Soviet rule, the Communists skillfully squeezed the last juices from an exhausted population for the sake of their imperial aims — in other words, for the sake of competing with Western powers for power and influence around the world”, he believed [37; 516]. The French historian and political scientist Hélène Carrère d’Ancoss, who considered the USSR to be a form of the Russian Empire, also held the same point of view [38].

One of the criteria for categorizing the USSR as an empire, the authors considered its complex hierarchical structure. Russia, “with its incredible ethnic diversity, encompassing Europe and Asia, four world religions and a whole scale of different lifestyles and economic patterns”, is nothing less than an “empire” — wrote A. Kappeler. He believed that “... the view of Russian history as the history of a nation-state is erroneous, and such an approach will inevitably lead to a delusion...” [39; 8-9]. Another of the grounds for attributing the USSR to the imperial type of states was its insufficient modernity from the point of view of the Western author, especially in the socio-political sphere. “The empire is the peak of development of an extensive non-modernized state, as its philosophy of income extraction is extensive, not intensive” — notes the professor of sociology at the University of Birmingham K. Kader [40; 31]. At the same time, the authors emphasize that the ruling circles of the USSR denied the imperial character of their state. “On the contrary, the Soviet Union sought the exact opposite goal — to convince its citizens and the whole world that it was not an empire. At the same time, the behavior of the USSR eventually earned it an imperial reputation both in the eyes of its own citizens and the rest of the world” — notes M. Beissinger [41; 363].

Stanford University professor Norman M. Naimark, analyzing the policy of the Soviet state of the 20-50s with regard to certain ethnic and social groups, suggests not to separate some repressions from others, but rather to speak about the genocidal nature of the entire Stalinist regime, which “killed systematically, not episodically” [42]. In his book, N.M. Neimark writes: “Stalin did not talk about exterminating all Ukrainians or Kazakhs — Stalin talked about the destruction of certain conditions of everyday life of farmers in Ukraine or nomads in Kazakhstan, which made them exactly Ukrainians or Kazakhs, respectively” [43].

Special mention should be made of the work of Harvard University professor Terry Martin. In his opinion, the Soviet Union was neither a federation nor a mono-ethnic state. The originality of Soviet policy, in his opinion, was that the authorities supported the external forms of existence of national minorities — culture, language, elites, territories — to a much greater extent than the national majority — Russians. In this way, the Bolsheviks tried to combine the demands of national elites with the demands of central elites, who aimed to create an economically and politically unified state. To characterize this system, T. Martin introduces a new term — the empire of “positive activity”, i.e., positive discrimination [44]. T. Martin identifies four key prerequisites that conditioned the Bolsheviks’ national policy. First, the Bolsheviks realized that

nationalism was the most dangerous competing ideology for them and tried to hijack the national elites' agenda by offering minorities formal sovereignty in a "Soviet" form. Second, the Bolsheviks considered national self-consciousness an inevitable but temporary phenomenon on the road to internationalism. Therefore, they saw the fulfillment of some of the national elites' demands not just as a necessary concession, but also as a temporary one on the path to achieving internationalism. Third, the Bolsheviks were convinced, that the nationalism of the non-Russian peoples of Russia was caused primarily by a reaction to oppression by the tsarist regime and distrust of the Great Russians. The shared experience of Soviet life should, in their understanding, have eradicated this phenomenon. Fourth, the national policy of the Bolsheviks was in close connection with their foreign policy. The encouraging policy towards national minorities was carried out in order to get a positive response from neighboring peoples in an oppressed state and to increase the possibilities of influencing them in order to carry out the "world revolution" [45; 58-59].

T. Martin considered the USSR to be a highly centralized state, seeking to invade all spheres of life and using extreme forms of violence. It emerged as the successor of the Russian Empire, re-conquered most of the peripheries belonging to the empire, but then "embarked on a policy of strengthening non-Russian nations and their construction even where they hardly existed" [46; 61]. Francine Hirsch published a book on the role of "imperial ethnographers" in the design and development of Soviet national policy. In her work, Hirsch sought to disagree with Martin on virtually all issues. While Martin emphasizes the novelty of Soviet national policy, one of Hirsch's main theses boils down to justifying the continuity between the national policies of the Romanov Empire and the Soviet Union through specialist ethnographers [47].

Apologists for the USSR often point to the fact that the republics, including Kazakhstan, were dominated by local ethnic elites, justifying the non-imperial character of the Soviet system of government. "Local leaders who, by agreement with Moscow-Center, received a fairly high degree of autonomy in dealing with internal affairs, while remaining, of course, fully loyal to basic Soviet principles", writes S. Abashin in an article with the telling title "'Soviet = Colonial?'. (For and Against)" [48; 34]. E. Rudyk, Professor of the Department of Digital Economy at Dubna State University, speaking at the Round Table of the "Alternatives" magazine, stated that the USSR cannot be called an empire on the grounds that Russians as "the people forming the state, cementing the country" did not have any privileges; on the contrary, representatives of non-Russian ethnic groups had privileges in the national republics [49].

The autonomy of republican elites in governing their republics is greatly exaggerated by apologists of the USSR. Any appointment in the national republics, in violation of their constitutions, was actually made in Moscow. There was a principle of "nomenclature", i.e., a list of positions and the order of their approval. The group approved by the Politburo of the CPSU Central Committee included the first secretaries of the Central Committees of the republican Communist Parties, regional committees, city committees in cities of union importance, as well as the chief editors of central party publications. In the government, these were Union Commissars (ministers) and top military leaders, as well as ambassadors to foreign countries. In the national economy, they were directors of the largest factories and heads of creative unions. The group, approved by the Secretariat of the CPSU Central Committee, included party, state and Soviet leaders of lower rank: deputy ministers, second secretaries of regional party committees, chairmen of regional executive committees of Soviets, etc. [50]. The institution of second secretaries of the Central Committees of the Communist Parties of the national republics should be especially noted. "The republics and national autonomies were rigidly tied to Russia. There was an institute of second secretaries, who were always Slavs" — testifies the former leader of the USSR M. Gorbachev in his memoirs [51].

Throughout the Soviet history of Kazakhstan, the degree of participation of local elites in the management of the republic was minimal. Out of 20 leaders of the party organization only 5 were representatives of the local elite (M. Murzagaliev, J. Shayakhmetov, I. Yusupov, D. Kunayev, N. Nazarbayev). They remained in power only on condition of absolute loyalty to the central authorities and any attempt to argue and defend national interests instantly led to their removal (Zh. Shayakhmetov in 1954, D. Kunayev in 1962). The institutions of party and economic nomenclature and the practice of appointing second secretaries turned even the partial sovereignty enshrined in the Constitution into a complete fiction.

The formal participation of the local elite in the management of the regions and even the presence of their representatives in the highest governing bodies (D. Kunayev's membership in the Politburo of the CPSU Central Committee in 1971–1987) cannot be an argument for denying the colonial nature of the USSR. We see similar representation in other colonial empires, particularly in the British Empire. In the same colonial India, in the Indian Civil Service system, by 1947, more than half of the top positions were held by local natives. In addition, there were formally autonomous "native principalities" where colonial

administration was present in the form of residencies and agencies. The British Dominions, after the 1926 Conference, got rid of British administration altogether, while remaining parts of the British Empire. The French protectorates (Tunisia, Morocco, Laos, Cambodia) retained a local administration that governed the colonies under the control of French governors. The Soviet system of forming the local administrative elite and controlling them from the center had distinct characteristics, but these were no more unique than those of other colonial systems around the world.

The colonial nature of Center-Periphery relations was especially evident in the issue of formation of the administrative-territorial system of Kazakhstan and its legal status. The entire Soviet history is a history of complete disregard of the republic interests in this matter and complete subordination of all measures to the interests of the Union center. "The Union had the right to take to its consideration and decide almost any issue, which made the real competence and sovereignty of the republican authorities largely formal", testifies the Secretary General of the CPSU Central Committee M.S. Gorbacheva in his report at the plenum of the CPSU Central Committee on the national question on September 19, 1989 [52; 25].

It is the constitutional evolution of Kazakhstan from an autonomous republic within Russia to a formally independent union republic that is cited by apologists of the Soviet Union as an example of the positive role of the Soviet political regime for the history of Kazakh statehood. One could indeed agree with this, if such an evolution was caused by the goals of national development of the people of Kazakhstan. However, objective analysis shows that all measures to change the state system of Kazakhstan were caused exclusively by utilitarian tasks of the party leadership arising from the current international situation. As early as 1924, discussing the creation of Central Asian republics, Deputy People's Commissariat G. Broido noted, that "Central Asia... represented by all the constituent nationalities, especially Tajiks, Turkmens, Kyrgyz and Karakirgis, is an outpost on the routes to Persia, Afghanistan, India, Tibet, Kashgar, Kulja, and the unification of Soviet Central Asia is a form and means of expansion of the Soviet Union in foreign Asia in the future" [53].

Discussions of future administrative and territorial organization in the national peripheries and forms of national statehood began from the first days of Soviet power. By creating the USSR, the Bolshevik leaders, agreeing to the creation of an independent Transcaucasian Federative Republic, actually blocked the possibilities of developing similar integrative strategies put forward by the Turkestan, Tatar, Bashkir and Kazakh autonomists [23; 213]. The main reason, in our opinion, was the fact that the Transcaucasian Federation united three completely different ethnic groups, both linguistically and confessionally — Georgians, Azerbaijanis and Armenians, while the projects of a united Turkestan or Kazakh-Bashkir Federation could unite related Turkic-Muslim ethnic groups with the prospect of forming a single and potentially dangerous for the central government ethnic community. This was the point made by P. Henze, who emphasized the efforts of the Bolsheviks, whose purposeful policy led to the fact that cultural and ethnic beginnings began to dominate in Central Asia over the awareness of common Turkic and Muslim unity: "The triumph of the Bolsheviks and Lenin's program contributed to the preservation of the Russian Empire, as far as possible, while maintaining the colonial status of Central Asia" [54; 51–53].

In Kazakhstan, the pressure against the Alashev movement had been continuous since the late 1920s. Most of the former Alashevists were expelled from Kazakhstan and publicly repented, but were under constant scrutiny because of concerns about the spread of their influence. Stalin and his entourage suspected Alashev leaders of organizing a nationalist underground movement and propagating nationalism. From 1929, the OGPU organs monitored the Alashevskis and "nationalist-avoiders" connections in the Party apparatus in an attempt to discover an underground nationalist organization [23; 322]. In 1926–1937, all real and potential opposition in Kazakhstan was physically destroyed by the hands of Stalin's proteges F. Goloshchekin and L. Mirzoyan. Kazakhs ceased to be the majority on the territory of the republic and "Kazakh separatism" ceased to be a real factor in domestic politics. Moreover, the demographic catastrophe of the Kazakh people due to organized famine, brutal suppression of armed protests and almost complete extermination of the national intelligentsia reduced the risks of separatism in Soviet Kazakhstan to zero.

Thus, the union (formally sovereign) status of the individual republics had little to do with domestic politics; the foreign policy situation was much more important. The very creation of the USSR and the emergence of autonomous republics in the eastern parts of the former Russian Empire was connected with attempts to involve the peoples of Asia in the processes of "world revolution" after the decline of the revolutionary movement in Europe in the early 1920s. The image of the Soviet "empire in reverse" was supposed to become an example for the countries of the East that were experiencing colonial oppression from the West. The creation of a formally sovereign union republic is not a manifestation of positive discrimination

and certainly not an attempt to compensate Kazakhs for the consequences of the genocidal policy of 1927–1931. It was the result of a combination of two factors: first, the persistent struggle of the nationally oriented part of Kazakh communists, influenced by the ideas of Alash, to strengthen the sovereignty of Kazakhstan; second, the interest of the Bolshevik Party leadership in creating a positive image of the USSR in the international arena.

### Conclusions

Thus, we see that the Bolshevik/Communist party leadership pursued a classic imperial policy in Kazakhstan and other peripheral territories of the USSR, characterized by subordinating the interests of the regions to the interests of the imperial military-political elite, ignoring the formal sovereignty of the union and autonomous republics, pursuing an active colonization policy to the detriment of the interests of the local population, and cultural and linguistic assimilation.

The USSR, like the Russian Empire that preceded it, was not a state of the Russian people. The empire is not a nation-state at all; it is a non-ethnic system. Russians within the imperial system were the same colonized people, but unlike other peoples, they were the majority, the demographic and cultural core of the empire, so the imperial elite (multi-ethnic in its composition) shamelessly used the human and creative resources of the Russian and other peoples to achieve their goals related to the ideas of world domination and the construction of an ideal social order.

The main reason for the decline and disintegration of the Soviet Union is quite simple. D.Lieven believes that “this empire was based on an ideology that did not stand the test of time. The Marxist-Leninist economic system turned out to be less effective than capitalism” [37; 518]. It should be added that the national policy of the Soviet empire caused disillusionment of ethnic cultural and political elites (including the Russian ethnic elite), their passive and active resistance caused the collapse of the political system of the USSR, leading to its collapse.

### Acknowledgements

*The work was carried out with the financial support of the Committee of Science of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Republic of Kazakhstan, research topic History of Northern Kazakhstan from ancient times to modern times; (IRN BR21882225).*

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А. Күзембайұлы, Е. Әбіл

## Қазақстан және КСРО: империя жөнінде дискуссиялар

Кеңес билігінің ішкі түп негізін тұтас құбылыс ретінде түсіну және «Орталық-Периферия» қатынастарын сол құбылыстың жеке бөлігі ретінде зерттеу — қазіргі кезеңдегі қазақстандық қоғамның тарихи санасын қалыптастыру барысындағы негізгі мәселелердің бірі. Зерттеу әдебиеттерінде бұл мәселені талқылаудың ұзақ тарихы бар. Пікірталас екі мәселеге байланысты — КСРО империя болды ма? Егер ол болса, ол классикалық империя болды ма? Ал Қазақстан классикалық колония болды ма? Пікірталас нәтижелерін талдау батыстық зерттеу дәстүрінде Кеңес Одағының империялық сипаты туралы көзқарас басым екенін көрсетті. Заманауи ресей саясаттану және тарих ғылымдарында екі тұжырымдама басым алуда. Біріншісі — КСРО-ның толығымен империялық сипатына қарсы. Екіншісі — КСРО-ның империя болғанымен келісіп, ол «империяның жаңа түрі», «Орталық-Периферия» қатыстарының теңсіздігіне негізделмеген империя болды деп есептейді. Қазақстандық зерттеу дәстүрі осы мәселе бойынша әзірше толығымен тұрақтанбаған. Сонымен бірге, большевиктік/коммунистік партияның басшылығы Қазақстан және басқа КСРО-ның перифериялық аймақтарында классикалық империялық саясатты өткізгенін айтуға болады. Ол саясат аймақтардың мүдделерін толығымен империялық әскери-саяси элита мүдделеріне бағындыруға, одақтас және автономиялық республикаларының егемендігінің формалдығына, жергілікті халық мүддесіне қайшы келетін белсенді көш-қон саясатын өткізуге, мәдени-тілдік ассимиляция саясына негізделген.

*Кілт сөздер:* Кеңес Одағы, Қазақстан, империя, отар, отарлық саясат, тарихнама, постколониализм, деколонизация, тарихи сана.

А. Кузембайұлы, Е. Абиль

## Казахстан и СССР: дискуссии об империи

Проблема понимания природы советской власти и отношений «центр-периферия» в частности — одна из ключевых тем в процессе формирования исторического сознания казахстанского общества на современном этапе. В исследовательской литературе существует длительная история обсуждения этого вопроса. Дискуссия сводится к двум аспектам — был ли СССР империей и, если да, был ли он классической империей, а Казахстан — классической колонией. Анализ результатов дискуссии показал, что в западной исследовательской традиции преобладает точка зрения, согласно которой Советский Союз имел имперский характер. В современной российской политической и исторической науке существуют концепции как полностью отрицающие имперский характер СССР, так и считающие СССР «империей нового типа», не основанной на неравноправных отношениях модели «центр-периферия». Казахстанская исследовательская традиция в данное время находится на стадии формирования. Однако можно утверждать, что руководство большевистской (коммунистической) партии проводило в Ка-

захстане и других периферийных территориях СССР классическую имперскую политику. Эта политика включала подчинение интересов регионов приоритетам имперской военно-политической элиты, игнорирование формального суверенитета союзных и автономных республик, активной колонизаторской политики в ущерб местному населению, а также культурно-языковую ассимиляцию.

*Ключевые слова:* СССР, Казахстан, империя, колония, колониальная политика, историография, постколониализм, деколонизация, историческое сознание.

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#### Information about the authors

**Kuzembayuly Amanzhol** — Doctor of Historical Sciences, Professor, Akhmet Baitursynuly Kostanay Regional University, Kostanay, Kazakhstan, <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8722-3992>

**Abil Yerkin** — Doctor of Historical Sciences, Professor, B. Beissenov Karaganda Academy under the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Karaganda, Kazakhstan, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3662-7003>