

The October Revolution and Bolshevik principles for solving the problem of National Autonomy

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Introduction

The October Revolution of 1917 was one of the most significant and momentous events in the history of the 20th century, leading to the collapse of the Russian Empire and the creation of the first socialist state in the world. This event not only changed the political landscape of Russia, but also had a profound impact on international politics, inspiring subsequent revolutions and independence movements around the world. However, one of the most complex problem the Bolsheviks faced after seizing power was the problem of national autonomy for the numerous ethnic groups that inhabited the vast territories of the former empire. While researching the topic, there are several important questions that can be considered for deeper understanding and analysis. For example: 1. What were the main causes of the national problem in Kazakhstan before and after the October Revolution? 2. What were the Bolshevik principles regarding national autonomy? 3. How did the national policy of the Bolsheviks influence the subsequent development of the Soviet Union and post-Soviet states? Based on these questions it will help to deepen understanding of a complex and multidimensional topic, and contribute to a more comprehensive analysis of Bolshevik principles and their practical application in the context of national autonomy.

The topic remains extremely relevant and important for contemporary historical and political study. The October Revolution and subsequent actions of the Bolsheviks laid the foundation for the formation of the Soviet Union, a multi-ethnic state that included various ethnic and national groups.¹

From a researcher's perspective, I aim to analyze the Bolshevik approach to national autonomy during the October Revolution and evaluate its effectiveness and implications for modern solutions to national autonomy issues. As an author delving into the complex history of the October Revolution and its approach to national autonomy, my aim is to uncover how Bolshevik principles addressed these issues and to explore their relevance to modern

| ¹ LIPATOV 1957: 965.

challenges. The October Revolution marked a pivotal moment where the Bolsheviks sought to reshape the national landscape of the former Russian Empire, promising autonomy to various ethnic groups. My research will provide a detailed examination of these policies, their implementation, and their outcomes.

Through a careful study of primary sources, archival documents and scientific reports, the study aims to uncover the complex interaction of local, national and international factors that influenced the revolutionary process in Kazakhstan. Moreover, the study examines the role of key players, including the Kazakh intellectuals, Bolshevik forces, and external influences on revolutionary events in the Kazakh context. The historical science of Kazakhstan plays a special role in the public consciousness, exerting a significant influence on the formation of the national doctrine and historical memory of the country's past. This research aims to bridge the gap between historical analysis and contemporary policy-making. By understanding the Bolshevik approach to national autonomy, we can gain valuable insights into how to address similar issues today. This work will contribute to academic discourse and offer practical recommendations for resolving national autonomy conflicts in diverse societies.

Literature Review

Theoretical foundations of Bolshevik National Policy

The study of the topic of the October Revolution and the Bolsheviks' national policy has attracted the attention of many historians, political scientists and sociologists. But to understand the Bolshevik principles for solving the problem of national autonomy during the October Revolution, a comprehensive examination of sources is essential. These sources include the foundational texts and proclamations of Bolshevik leaders, as well as official decrees and speeches that articulated and implemented their policies. "The Right of Nations to Self-Determination" (1914): This seminal work by Lenin outlines the Bolshevik stance on national self-determination, advocating for the right of oppressed nations to secede and form independent states.² Furthermore, it should be noted the Decrees of the Soviet Government: "Decree on Peace (1917)", it was issued by the Soviet government, it called for an immediate armistice and the opening of peace negotiations, emphasizing the right of nations to self-determination³ and "Decree on Land (1917)" primarily focused on agrarian reform. This decree also addressed the redistribution of land to various nationalities within the former Russian Empire, highlighting the interconnectedness of social and national issues.⁴ The examination of these sources will provide a nuanced understanding of the Bolshevik approach to national autonomy, revealing the theoretical foundations, practical implementations, and challenges faced during and after the October Revolution.

The views and approaches of different authors to this topic vary, which is due to the diversity of methodological and theoretical approaches. In the work of Academician Akai Nusipbekov and G. F. Dakhshleiger «History of Soviet Kazakhstan», interest in studying the history

² LENIN 1914.

³ LIPATOV—SAVENKOV 1957: 44–47.

⁴ LIPATOV—SAVENKOV 1957: 47–48.

of the Kazakh people manifested itself very early. However, he explains that only the victory of the Great October Socialist Revolution was the beginning of a deep, systematic and comprehensive study of Kazakhstan based on a truly scientific, Marxist-Leninist methodology.⁵ In addition, in the work of K. Nurpeisov “Alash and Alashorda” about the First All-Kazakh Congress from July 21–26, 1917 in Orenburg states that A. Baitursynov and M. Dulatov⁶ proposed the idea of “creating an autonomous independent Kazakh state”,⁷ and A. Bokeikhanov⁸ supported the National-territorial Autonomy of the Kazakhs “as part of a Democratic, Federal and Parliamentary Republic of Russia”. The congress resolution, preserved in the archive, stated that “Kazakhstan regions (...) should receive territorial-national autonomy,” showing strong support for A. Bokeikhanov’s proposal.⁹ It should be noted that in 1917 the Alash movement¹⁰ also changed its strategic and tactical decisions in accordance with the dramatically changed political and military situation. The author uses a historical and analytical approach, examining in detail the political decisions and steps of the Alash Party during the establishment of Soviet power in the country.

Among a sufficiently large number of scientific works devoted to the analysis of the socio-political situation in Kazakhstan in the early 20th century, we would like to highlight the works of D. A. Amanzholova¹¹, M. K. Koigeldiev¹², who were the first to study the life and activities of leaders and participants of the democratic movement “Alash” in the period of independence and made a great contribution to the methodological updating of scientific ideas about this complex and controversial period of the history of Kazakhstan, rehabilitation of outstanding figures of the Kazakh people — Alikhan Bokeikhanov.

However, as Nursultan Nazarbayev noted in “In the Stream of History,” the national program aimed to unite the region’s nationalities and proposed a democratic development path. Despite this, authoritarian tendencies hindered its implementation. The Kazakh people had a real chance to restore national statehood, but this was disrupted by a crisis in Russian society, leading to the Bolshevik dictatorship.¹³ In author’s work applies a sociological approach to the study of the Bolsheviks’ national policy.¹⁴ In the historiography of the October Revolution and the civil war in Kazakhstan, it is difficult to overestimate the importance of the historical and memoir novel “The Thorny Path” by S. Seifullin, the founder of Kazakh Soviet literature.

⁵ NUSUPBEKOV—DAKHSCHLEIGER n. d: 12.

⁶ The national leaders who led the Kazakh people’s struggle for independence in 1917. They laid the foundation of Kazakh statehood by organizing the First All-Kazakh Congress and proclaiming Alash autonomy.

⁷ The first political program of the Kazakh intellectuals, aimed at strengthening national statehood and self-government, appeared during the collapse of the Russian Empire, which later became the ideological basis of the Alashorda autonomy. See: ANES-ZAMZAYEVA 2023: 310–318.

⁸ Kazakh intellectual, educator and political figure, initiator of the Alash autonomy. Chairman of the government of the Alash autonomy. Commissioner of the Provisional Government (with gubernatorial powers) in 1917.

⁹ NURPEISOV 1995: 64.

¹⁰ A movement aimed at creating an independent state, organised by Kazakh intellectuals in 1917. It promoted national democratic ideas and created the autonomy of Alashorda, but was defeated in the civil war and destroyed by the Soviet authorities.

¹¹ AMANZHOLOVA 2009: 412.

¹² KOIGELDIYEV 1995: 368.

¹³ NAZARBAYEV 1999: 169–172.

¹⁴ The Bolshevik national policy formally proclaimed the self-determination of nations, but in practice was reduced to rigid centralisation and suppression of any ethnic autonomy. In Kazakhstan, this manifested itself in the liquidation of Alash-Orda, forced collectivisation to weaken national identity.

In this book the author writes about the struggle to establish Soviet power and the essence of the lives of the fighters and workers of the country. The content of the book revolves around the 1916 uprising. The work covers the events of 1916–1919. Of course, it is also true that some of the author's opinions, based on a class position, about the Alashorda that often contradict today's views. In detail characterizing the activity of this party, and his intention to leave in print historical factual information about it.¹⁵ In subsequent, historical-party materials the general historical approach did not decrease, but tended to increase.

The Black Book of Communism presenting the author's view of the communist regimes of the 20th century. In particular, the October Revolution of 1917 is now seen by some as an accident that derailed Russia's democratic progress, benefiting post-Soviet leaders by distancing them from Soviet guilt. Conversely, Soviet historiography framed it as an inevitable, mass-supported liberation, legitimizing the Soviet regime. With the Soviet Union's fall, this Marxist view faded but still lingers, especially in the West.¹⁶ The authors use a comparative approach, analyzing the Bolsheviks' national policies in the context of other multi-ethnic states. They also compare the experience of the Soviet Union with similar cases in other countries, exploring how different models of ethnic governance affected the stability and integrity of the state.

During this research, documents from the State Archive of the Republic of Kazakhstan were actively used. The analysis was carried out on the basis of collections of published documents and materials relating to a wide range of issues to the related research topic. An important source of information was materials from the periodical press of that time, as well as memoirs, which were widely used in reconstructing events and assessing their impact. The study is based on a thorough analysis of these documents, which allows more fully reveal the dynamics of socio-political transformations in Kazakhstan during the October Revolution.

The examination of these primary sources will offer a detailed insight into the Bolshevik stance on national autonomy, uncovering their theoretical foundations, practical implementations, and the challenges encountered during and after the October Revolution. This analysis will serve as a foundation for assessing the relevance and applicability of these historical lessons to contemporary issues of national autonomy and the resolution of ethnic conflicts.

The methodological foundation of the article is made up of important principles that support scientific knowledge, such as objectivity, historicity, consistency and comparative historical analysis. Undoubtedly, the study paid due attention to the contribution of Kazakh historians of the Soviet period to the study of the October Revolution's history of 1917. These historians made a significant contribution to the formation of the scientific heritage, covering the events of the revolution in the context of Kazakh history. Their works became an integral part of the historiography of the period, helping to reveal the unique features and characteristics of revolutionary processes on the territory of Kazakhstan.

The October Revolution was the peak in the development and formation of the democratic movement of the Kazakh intellectuals, the political formation of the Alash party and move-

¹⁵ SEIFULLIN 2024.

¹⁶ COURTOIS 1999: 39–41.

ment, which proclaimed the autonomy of Alash after October 1917 at the second All-Kazakh Congress. However, the origins of all these important historical events date back to the years of the first Russian Revolution.

The October Revolution and its impact on national policy

It can be reasonably assumed that the main reason for the October Revolution of 1917 was the All-Russian socio-economic and state-political crisis. The October Revolution of 1917 in Russia, which led to the overthrow of the Provisional Government and the establishment of Bolshevik rule, had a significant impact on all aspects of life in the former Russian Empire, including national policies in territories inhabited by different ethnic groups. In this context, the impact of the October Revolution on national politics in Kazakhstan was particularly notable and multifaceted. Before the October Revolution, Kazakhstan was under the control of the Russian Empire, and national policy in the region was aimed at strengthening colonial control, Russification and assimilation of the Kazakh population. After the revolution, Kazakhstan, like other regions, began the process of establishing Soviet power.

In the late summer and early autumn of 1917, mass resistance to the Provisional Government grew throughout Russia. This created the conditions for strengthening the influence of the Bolsheviks in the Soviets. And the defeat of the Kornilov mutiny raised the prestige of the Bolsheviks forever. In this situation, the Bolshevik Party again put forward the slogan 'All Power to the Soviets,' which had been dropped after the July events of 1917. Now this slogan was aimed at armed revolt, the overthrow of the Provisional Government and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat.¹⁷ On 24 October (6 November) 1917, an armed uprising began in Petrograd. The next day the rebels seized the most important facilities in the city. On 25 October (7 November) 1917, the Military Revolutionary Committee announced the abolition of the Provisional Government. Thus, the October Revolution was victorious.¹⁸ This historic event set the stage for the formation of a new socialist state and the dictatorship of the proletariat, fundamentally altering the course of Russian and world history.

However, published in 2004, "History of Kazakhstan (90 questions and answers)" by Artykbayev Zh. O. describes the October situation as follows: "On 25 October (7 November) 1917, an armed coup d'état¹⁹ took place in Petrograd, bringing to power a coalition of radical Social Democrats and Social Revolutionaries, including the Bolsheviks and Left SRs.²⁰ The Council of People's Commissars under the leadership of Lenin took over the functions of the government. The decrees adopted at the 2nd All-Russian Congress of Soviets declared Russia's withdrawal from the war, the transfer of land to the peasants and the establishment of Soviet power."²¹

¹⁷ The domination of the working class (proletariat) is a temporary political control to eliminate capitalism and transition to communism; See: NURPEISOV 1995: 133.

¹⁸ LIPATOV—SAVENKOV 1957: 3.

¹⁹ A coup d'état (French: 'stroke of state') or simply a coup, is typically an illegal and overt attempt by a military organization or other government elites to unseat an incumbent leadership.

²⁰ The Left SRs (Party of Left Socialist-Revolutionaries) is the radical wing of the SR party, which spun off in 1917. PROTASOVA 2016: 159.

²¹ ARTYKBAYEV 2004: 131.

Nurpeisov states,

“local forces influenced by the Bolsheviks, soldiers from the fronts of the First World War and soldiers from the city garrisons played a decisive role in the establishment of Soviet power in Kazakhstan.”²²

The political situation in Kazakhstan was special: a small proletariat, landed immigrants, a significant number of privileged Kazakhs, and Kazakhs who supported the Alash party and Muslim organisations. In autumn 1917, the Bolsheviks had little influence in the region. However, Kazakhstan's colonial status favored the rapid establishment of Soviet power in the major cities after the October coup.

The reaction to the revolutionary events in Kazakhstan was mixed. Part of the population, especially Russian workers and soldiers, supported the Bolsheviks. At the same time, a significant part of the Kazakh intellectuals and the traditional elite associated with the Alash movement were wary. They favored the creation of autonomy within a renewed Russia, but on the basis of democratic principles rather than under the dictatorship of the proletariat, as the Bolsheviks proposed.

“When the revolution won in Petrograd and the process of establishing Soviet power in Kazakhstan was underway, the draft program of the Alash Party was published in No. 251 of the newspaper ‘Qazaq’ of 21 November 1917. According to the decisions of the First General Congress of Kazakhstan, the draft program of the party prepared by Alikhan Bokeikhanov, Akhmet Baitursynov and others consisted of ten articles.”²³

The Alashorda movement (leaders of the Alash autonomy) sought to establish their own autonomy and self-government, which later led to conflicts and confrontation with the Bolsheviks who had established control in the region.²⁴

After the Bolshevik victory in Petrograd and Moscow in October 1917, events began to develop rapidly on the periphery of the empire. In Kazakhstan, as in many other national peripheries, news of the revolution and the establishment of Soviet power reached with some delay, but had a significant impact on the political situation in the region. The Bolsheviks sought to take control of all key cities and administrative centers. In November 1917, the process of establishing Soviet power in Kazakhstan began, which took place differently in each region. For example, the contribution by Nurpeisov (1987) makes it clear that the establishment of Soviet power in the region lasted for several months — from the end of October 1917 to the beginning of March 1918. The Soviet power was established peacefully in Syr-Darya, Akmola region and Bukey Horde, where supporters of the Provisional Government were unable to offer armed resistance. And in Turgay, Ural, Orenburg, Semey and Zhetysay regions there was a fierce struggle for the establishment of Soviet power. Soviet power was established in counties and uyezds by armed uprising of Red Guards and soldiers of local garrisons.

²² NURPEISOV 1995: 134.

²³ NURPEISOV 1995: 135.

²⁴ NURPEISOV 1987: 79.

Workers and soldiers of Perovsk (Kyzylorda) seized power in their hands in October 30, 1917. The Soviet government was established in Tashkent in November 1, 1917 as a result of fierce fighting. And in mid-November 1917, the Soviet government won a victory in the city of Chernyaev (Shymkent). In November — December, Soviet power was peacefully established in Aulieata, Turkestan, Kazaly, Aral settlement and other major population centres of the region. Due to the predominance of Cossack-Russian troops in Kokshetau, Pavlodar, Atbasar and Oskemen districts, the struggle for Soviet power faced some difficulties. In March, 1918 a Soviet power was established in Zharkent, Sergiopol (Ayagoz), Taldykorgan, and in early April — in Lepsi. In late 1917 and November 1918, Soviet power was established in Kazakhstan mainly in cities and other densely populated areas.²⁵

After the victory of the October Revolution, national, first of all, issues of national state building became more acute and began to be discussed.

Putting the issue of national autonomy on the agenda

Before determining the level of research into the ‘national question’ of Soviet Kazakhstan, it is necessary to explain Bolshevik national policy and the national problem. Bolshevik national policy sought to recognise the right of peoples to self-determination, including the right to secede and form independent states. In theory, the Bolsheviks sought to ensure national autonomy and equality for all peoples within the socialist state, with the aim of attracting various ethnic groups and nationalities to their side, especially in the multi-ethnic regions of the former Russian Empire. In practice, however, national policy was often hampered by the need for centralised control, which sometimes led to contradictions between the stated principles and the actual actions of the authorities. The authors of “The Black Book of Communism: Crimes, Terror, Repression” state,

“a movement originated in the rapid emancipation of the diverse nations under imperial Russian rule. Many of these nations demanded first autonomy, then independence.”²⁶

Lenin’s policy during the October Revolution of 1917 played a key role in his strategy to consolidate power and support for the Bolsheviks among the multi-ethnic population of the former Russian Empire. V. I. Lenin on the eve of October 1917 wrote:

“In the national question, the proletarian party must defend, first of all, the proclamation and immediate implementation of the complete freedom of all nations and nationalities separation from Russian Empire oppressed by Tsarism, forcibly annexed or forcibly kept within the borders of the state, i. e. annexed.”²⁷

Lenin proclaimed the right of nations to self-determination in 1917 as a tactical tool to destroy the Russian Empire and bring national minorities to the side of the Bolsheviks, but in practice created a centralised Soviet empire where the real power belonged to Moscow.

²⁵ NURPEISOV 1987: 84–96.

²⁶ COURTOIS 1999: 41.

²⁷ LENIN Vol. 31: 167–168.

Lenin and the Bolsheviks called for immediate peace, which was enshrined in the Decree on Peace adopted at the Second All-Russian Congress of Soviets in November 8 (October 26), 1917. He regarded the war as imperialist and unnecessary, and his policy was to withdraw Russia from the war and make a separate peace with the Central Powers such as Britain, France and Germany.²⁸ After the overthrow of the Provisional Government, Lenin headed a new government, the Council of People's Commissars (SNK), made up of Bolsheviks. The SNK took over the executive branch and began issuing decrees aimed at socialising the economy and establishing control over industry and banks.²⁹ Lenin was in favour of a rapid and decisive seizure of power by the Bolsheviks. In his writings and speeches, Lenin insisted that the transfer of power to the Soviets (workers' and soldiers' deputies) was necessary to prevent counter-revolution and chaos.

Lenin and the Bolsheviks sought co-operation with national movements that opposed the imperial policy of oppression and Russification. Recognising the need to take account of national interests, Lenin hoped to attract representatives of the various ethnic groups to side with the Bolsheviks in the struggle against the Provisional Government and its supporters.

The October Revolution in Petrograd dramatically changed the political situation in all regions of the country. After the dictatorial policy of the Bolsheviks, national figures, who had hoped for a Constituent Assembly, began to struggle everywhere for the creation of national autonomies. The Turkestan Mukhtariat announced the beginning of the creation of such national-territorial autonomies on 28 November.³⁰ The leaders of the autonomy, which included M. Tynyshbaev and M. Shokai, intended to form an entire Turkic state. Soon afterwards, the Second All-Kazak Congress, convened in Orynbor and held on December 5-12, decided to form a government under the name of Alashorda consisting of 25 people and to declare Alash autonomy in case the Kazakhs of Zhetysu and Syr Darya districts joined the Turkestan autonomy.³¹ It is reasonable to assume that a significant part of the Kazakh intellectuals and nationalists united around the Alash party and the idea of creating an autonomous Kazakhstan. Alash-Orda sought co-operation with white anti-Bolshevik forces, which made it an opponent of Soviet power.

Here it must be added that Alikhan Bokeikhanov, a Chingizid by birth and leader of the Kazakh democrats, was closely associated with Russian liberal circles and actively participated in political life, criticising the agrarian and cultural policies of the authorities but supporting inter-ethnic harmony and peaceful co-operation. As commissioner of the Provisional Government for the Turgay region, he opposed political and religious radicalism, supported women's rights, proportional national representation, and opposed private land ownership. Bokeikhanov also opposed local authorities' interference in partisanship and the adoption of illegal measures such as extortion, and took action against Bolshevik agitation among Kazakhs by arresting A. Dzhangildin.³² Despite his efforts, the Bolsheviks' consolidation of power and establishment of a centralized Soviet state ultimately limited the extent of Kazakh autonomy.

²⁸ LIPATOV—SAVENKOV 1957: 44–47.

²⁹ LIPATOV—SAVENKOV 1957: 43–44.

³⁰ KOIGELDIYEV 1995: 343.

³¹ KOIGELDIYEV 1995: 342–345.

³² AMANZHOLOVA 2020: 172–173.

In addition, at the Second All-Kazakh Congress, disagreements arose over the announcement and the beginning of the Alash-Orda government. One group, led by Bokeikhanov and his supporters, proposed to postpone the declaration of autonomy because of fears of armed Russian settlers and lack of arms among the Kazakhs. The other group, representatives of the western provinces, led by Dosmukhamedov³³, insisted on the immediate proclamation of Alash-Orda and the creation of an armed militia. As a result, the Semirechen delegates decided to support Bokeikhanov's position.³⁴ Characteristically, the creation of autonomy was motivated by the desire to protect the Kazakh people in conditions of anarchy and civil war. It was a natural reaction to the collapse of state institutions and the loss of control at both local and central levels.

Furthermore, Muslim organisations and clergy also often opposed the Bolsheviks, considering their atheistic and anti-religious policies a threat to the traditional way of life and Islam. In some areas of Kazakhstan, the Muslim population and religious leaders supported anti-Bolshevik forces and nationalist movements. The basic principles of the Soviet government's national policy are contained in two important documents — 1917. In the "Declaration of the Rights of the Peoples of Russia" adopted on 2 November 1917 and in the address of the Soviet government "To all working Muslims of Russia and the East" proclaimed on 20 November 1917. In January 1918 at the III All-Russian Congress of Soviets adopted the "Declaration of the Rights of the Labouring and Exploited People" prepared by V. I. Lenin. This document made it clear that the Communist Party was uncompromisingly in favour of a Soviet federation in the form of a state structure of a Soviet republic. The declaration states that "the Russian Soviet Republic will be established as a federation of Soviet national republics on the basis of the Union of Free Nations".³⁵ Bokeikhanov's assessment of the Soviets' first steps on the ground was given most prominently in his "Memorandum to Peasants, Workers and Soldiers" of 1 December 1917. He accused Lenin of single-handed irresponsible rule and urged the addressees to remember that

"the red mask of the revolutionary has fallen off the face of the Bolshevik and exposed his essence of a Black Hundreds",

since this party rejects the responsibility of the government to the people, democratic freedoms, and the unaccountability of citizens and deputies.³⁶ A. N. Bokeikhanov, himself once self-consciously enthusiastic about the ideas of socialism, saw a huge gulf between the loud declarations about socialism and the real deeds of the Soviet power. Another point that should be addressed is the anti-Bolshevik peasant uprisings.

Peasants were most interested in land and peace, and there was little information about the Bolsheviks in the villages other than vague stories from deserters. Despite the fact that there were no more than two thousand members of the Bolshevik movement in October 1917,

³³ One of the leaders of the western wing of the Alash party. He was a participant of the All-Russian Congress of Muslims in Moscow, where he was elected deputy chairman of the All-Russian Council of Muslims. He participated in the preparation of the draft law on the Constituent Assembly of the Provisional Government.

³⁴ AMANZHOLOVA 2009: 189–190.

³⁵ AKISHEV 1993: 291.

³⁶ Central State Archive of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Fund 17. Series 1. File 21. P. 1–2.

the Bolsheviks were able to take advantage of the power vacuum created in the autumn of 1917 to seize control. Their approach to the agrarian question was contrary to the wishes of the peasants, as they sought to nationalise land and create large collective farms.³⁷ Misunderstandings and conflicts quickly arose between the new Bolshevik regime and independent social movements, particularly over the agrarian revolution. Although the Bolsheviks had always advocated for land nationalization, they were forced by circumstances to adopt the Socialist Revolutionary program, allowing land redistribution to the peasants. The “Decree on Land” abolished private land ownership and authorized local agrarian committees to redistribute land, essentially legitimizing the peasant land seizures that had begun in the summer of 1917. While this move helped the Bolsheviks consolidate power, it delayed their true goal of collectivization, which would lead to a major confrontation with the peasantry a decade later.³⁸ These resistances made the process of establishing Soviet power in Kazakhstan a long and bloody one, requiring significant efforts by the Bolsheviks to suppress opposing forces and consolidate their control over the region.

The idea should also be added here, that at the Second All-Kazakh Congress, the decision on autonomy was taken after heated debates: some insisted on an immediate proclamation, while others suggested that the opinion of the non-indigenous population be sought first. The radicals, who were in the minority, threatened to join the Kokand autonomy³⁹ if their proposal was not supported. In the end, a compromise decision was reached: to find out within a month whether all Kazakhs in Turkestan could join the Alash autonomy, after which the decision of the congress would be officially announced.⁴⁰ Alash-Orda faced challenges both from within, such as disagreements over strategies and alignment with other regional powers like the Kokand Autonomy, and from outside, particularly from the advancing Soviet Red Army. The internal divisions and external military pressures ultimately weakened Alash-Orda’s position.

At the end of January 1918, the confrontation between the autonomists and the Kokand City Council of Workers’ and Soldiers’ Deputies began to escalate into open hostilities. Armed detachments that were on the side of the Soviet power began to fight against the Kokand government, in fact, they were the first in Russia to open the frontline of the civil war.⁴¹ The escalation of conflict in Kokand at the end of January 1918 had a significant impact on the Russian Civil War, as it marked one of the earliest outbreaks of armed hostilities between Soviet forces and regional autonomist movements. A further dimension is the confrontation in Kokand not only marked an early instance of civil war conflict but also set a precedent for the nature and intensity of the broader struggle, influencing the dynamics of resistance and the Soviet response throughout the Russian Civil War. The clashes in Kokand demonstrated that the civil war was not confined to the European parts of Russia but was spreading to Central

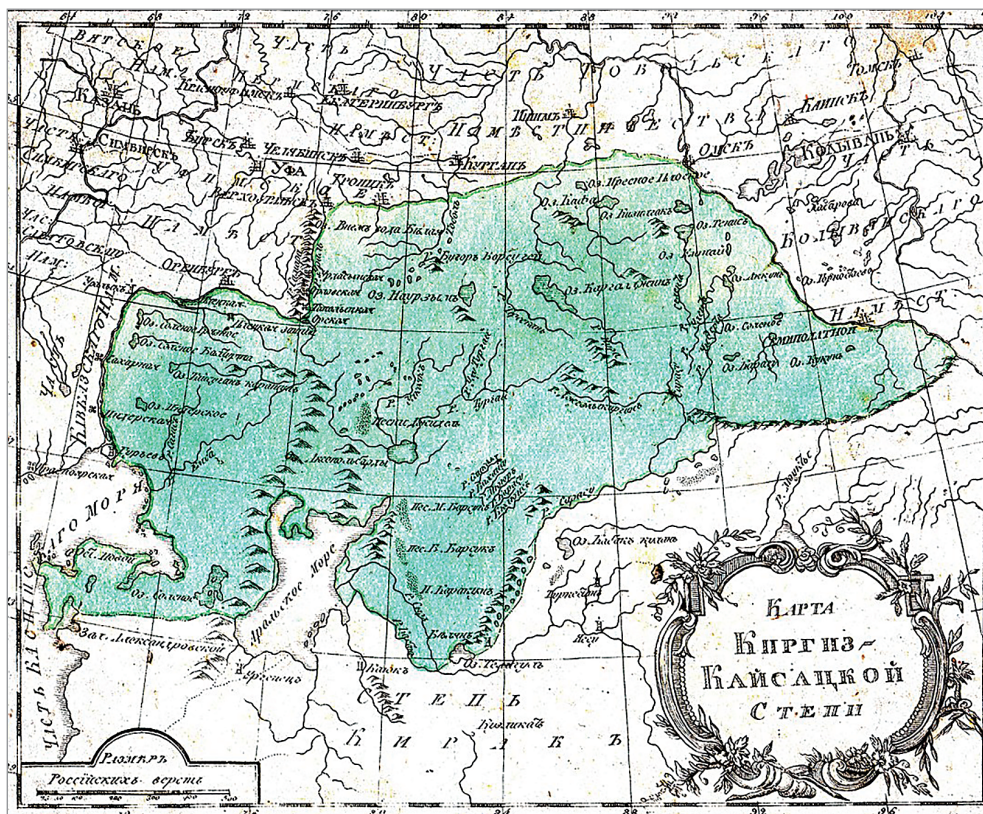
³⁷ COURTOIS 1999: 47–48.

³⁸ COURTOIS 1999: 51–52; LIPATOV—SAVENKOV 1957: 47–48.

³⁹ Turkestan Autonomy or Kokand Autonomy is an autonomous state within the Russian state, established on 28 November 1917 to ensure self-government of the peoples of the Turkestan region. Its emergence was due to the Soviet authorities’ failure to recognise the right of the peoples of Turkestan to self-government.

⁴⁰ AMANZHOLOVA 2009: 191–192.

⁴¹ AGZAMKHODZHAYEV 2006: 223.



Map from 1903. In the north, the border extends almost to Omsk and Kurgan, in the south to Kazalinsk and Perovsk (present-day Kyzylorda), and in the east to Zaisan. (www.caravan.kz)



Map from 1938. Map of Kazakhstan after joining the Soviet Union. The borders have changed, but the main territory has remained the same. (www.caravan.kz)

Asia. This broader geographical scope indicated that the conflict was more than a struggle between political factions in the Russian heartland; it was also about control over the diverse and distant regions of the former Russian Empire.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the results of the study showed that the origins of all important historical events in Kazakhstan in the early 20th century originate in the years of the First Russian Revolution. The February Revolution of 1917 became a catalyst for social and political activity of the national intelligentsia of Kazakhstan. The subsequent October Revolution was the peak in the development and formation of the democratic movement of the Kazakh intelligentsia and the political formation of the Alash party and movement, which proclaimed Alash autonomy at the Second All-Kazakh Congress in October, 1917. In summary, Alash-Orda played a critical role as a representative of Kazakh interests, advocating for autonomy and striving to protect the Kazakh people during a period of immense upheaval and uncertainty. The leaders, among others, were instrumental in shaping the vision and direction of the Alash Orda movement, advocating for political autonomy, cultural preservation, and the modernization of Kazakh society. Their efforts, although ultimately suppressed by the Soviet government, left a lasting impact on Kazakh national identity and the quest for self-determination. While the Alash Orda movement was ultimately suppressed by the Soviet regime, its legacy persisted in the cultural and national consciousness of the Kazakh people. The movement's emphasis on autonomy, modernization, and cultural preservation continued to shape Kazakhstan's national identity and played a role in the country's eventual independence.

It can be concluded that causes of October Revolution are the following: the First World War continued; the agrarian question was not solved (return of lands seized during the resettlement policy); the main issue of the right of nations to self-determination was not resolved; the colonial apparatus of governance was not broken, the policy of tsarist autocracy was continued. Overall, it can be seen that this led to the revolution after all. After the October Revolution, the newly formed USSR began to consolidate the territories of its constituent Union republics. At this point, a land dispute arose between the peoples under Tsarist Russia.

Therefore, the Second All-Russian Congress of Soviets adopted two important decrees: the "Decree on Peace" and the "Decree on Land", which abolished private ownership of land. According to this all land was placed at the disposal of local Soviets. Especially after the victory of the October Revolution, the national, above all, the issues of national state-building became more acute and began to be discussed. The basic principles of the national policy of the Soviet government are contained in two important documents — 1917. In the "Declaration of the Rights of the Peoples of Russia", adopted on 2 November, 1917 and published on 20 November, 1917 the declaration of the Soviet government "To all working Muslims of Russia and the East". It can be seen that the October armed uprising of 1917 led to the Civil War. This is how the Bolsheviks came to power in such a bloody way.

To sum up the whole research, given its profound and multifaceted impact, the events of this period became a catalyst for political and social change in the region, influencing the formation of Kazakh statehood and inter-ethnic relations. The October Revolution not only marked the advent of new power, but also marked the beginning of long-lasting processes that shaped the modern image of Kazakhstan.

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Abstract

The Bolsheviks, after the October Revolution of 1917, faced the challenge of uniting a multi-ethnic former Russian Empire. They promoted national self-determination, allowing ethnic groups some cultural and administrative autonomy within the Soviet framework. Autonomous republics and regions were created, but real power remained centralized to prevent separatism. This approach aimed to ease ethnic tensions while keeping firm control, shaping Soviet nationalities policy for decades.