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Cooperation of Kazakhstan and Iran in higher education and science

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Abstract

The purpose of the study is to identify the reasons for the low level of interaction between Kazakhstan and Iran. It also develops solutions and identifies prospects for mutual cooperation in this area via comparative qualitative research methods. As a result, the existence of a not sufficiently developed contractual and legal basis was confirmed. In conclusion, until Kazakhstan and Iranian parties sort out priorities in cooperation in the field of science and higher education, do not decide on the need of exchange experience, the state of cooperation in this area will remain at the same level as today.

Keywords: Scientific cooperation, Education, Iran, Kazakhstan.

Cooperación de Kazajstán e Irán en educación superior y ciencia

Resumen

El propósito del estudio es identificar las razones del bajo nivel de interacción entre Kazajstán e Irán, y desarrollar soluciones e identificar perspectivas de cooperación mutua en esta área a través de métodos comparativos de investigación cualitativa. Como resultado, se confirmó la existencia de una base contractual y legal no suficientemente desarrollada. En conclusión, hasta que Kazajstán y las partes iraníes resuelvan las prioridades en cooperación en el campo de la ciencia y la educación superior, no decidan sobre la necesidad de intercambiar experiencias, el estado de cooperación en esta área se mantendrá al mismo nivel que hoy.

Palabras clave: Cooperación científica, Educación, Irán, Kazajstán.

1. INTRODUCTION

If international relations can be divided into two main types: relations of rivalry and relations of cooperation, then relations between Kazakhstan and Iran can for certain be attributed to relations of cooperation.

After the signing of the Memorandum on Establishment of Diplomatic Relations between our countries, those of January 29, 1992, the Embassy of the Islamic Republic was opened in Almaty, which further was moved to the new capital of Kazakhstan - Astana (now Nur-Sultan) city in 2010. In 1993, the Embassy of the Republic of Kazakhstan began operating in the capital of Iran. On September 4,

1996, the Iranian Cultural Center was officially opened in Almaty with the participation of the Director of the Center Mehdi Sanai. And on April 20, 2012, the Cultural representation of the IRI Embassy in Nur-Sultan was opened with the participation of Cultural Counselor Asgar Saberi.

In general, if we consider the development of relations between the two countries in the field of culture, education, and science over the course of 27 years of cooperation, there is a positive dynamic, the relations do not standstill.

Before proceeding to an analysis of the status of the relations between Iran and Kazakhstan in the field of science and education, it would be nice to determine the importance of Iran in the development of science and education in our state. How far prospectively is the cooperation with an Islamic republic? Is it no better to finance into the education of our youth in the prestigious universities of the United States or in having centuries-old history universities of the Old World, where the whole world aspires? And no one disputes the profitability of scientific projects with advanced countries, for example, like Japan, South Korea, or with our neighbor, China, developing at a rapid pace. And, in turn, in which place is Kazakhstan for Iran on the scale of priority of scientific cooperation?

Firstly, Iran is a goldmine of information with its rich literature and history. This is a huge stratum of fiction in the Persian language unexplored by Kazakhstan's scientists, historians, and specialists in

other spheres. Iran, being the cradle of one of the most ancient civilizations, is important for Kazakhstan from the point of view of gaining access to handwritten historical sources to illuminate unknown pages of history, vision of historical events in Central Asia through the eyes of Eastern chroniclers. Ignorance of language, the lack of a sufficient number of specialists in Kazakhstan and scientists who speak Farsi are aggravated by the lack of a complete understanding of the Kazakh people about the art, culture and traditions of Iran.

Unfortunately, the world is often forced to take any information prepared by the Western media as reliable. And for a complete and objective vision of the picture, proper analysis and conclusion respectively and in the subsequent construction of a competent policy, painless resolution of disputes, conflict situations and a structured dialogue, it is necessary to listen to the second side, i.e. Iran. It should also be understood that Iran, being located in international isolation for several decades, did not cease to develop. Medicine, chemistry, physics and mathematics, and light industry are well developed in this country. Attention is also paid to the development of robotic science, agriculture, etc.

However, it should be certainly mentioned about the peculiarities of the Eastern mentality. S.V. Chugrov, a professor at Moscow State University of Foreign Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, defines the foreign policy mentality as

part of the deep collective self-knowledge and self-awareness of members of society, which includes their collective unconscious in the form of specific archetypes and innate images and is expressed in a particular political worldview, ... it is a part of the self-consciousness and self-awareness of society, which relates to the problems of international relations and, in particular, to political self-identification in relation to the world around. (CHUGROV, 2007).

In professor's view, the foreign policy mentality is inert, and it is difficult to be changed for a long time. By revealing the nature of the mentality, one can understand the tendency of its development and, therefore, assess the prospects for the relationship with it.

Let us look at the other side. How does the Iranian side see the future in the field of scientific cooperation with Kazakhstan? Kazakhstan is one of the few countries of the world community, can be even said of the Central Asian region, which maintain friendly relations with the Islamic Republic and try to develop them somewhat, considering the fact that thaw of relations between Tajikistan and Iran, possibly, will not come soon and the political elite of Uzbekistan does not particularly strive to expand ties with Iran.

The problem of education and science has not yet become the same traditional topic in educational literature on world politics as economic and legal aspects. (LEBEDEVA, 2013). Furthermore, VILLALOBOS (2017) talks about the new routes that have been imposed around the question of "research", oriented towards these democratic aims of "quality education", since what is about is to

consolidate knowledge in order to effectively alleviate the great evils that afflict Latin America.

Although it is a man who, at large evidence, becomes the main driving force in the political development of the world with his knowledge and skills, and hence in world politics. Likewise the economic aspect has displaced the military in its time, and for today human development comes to the fore. The future depends on a person's level of education. Thus, it can be said that education becomes a political factor in a modern world.

Moreover, today it is not enough just to be aware of information, it is necessary to analyze and skillfully operate it.

The post-industrial era with new technologies and related information, communication industries, as well as biotechnologies makes qualitatively new demands on people. The emerging new information society is based on the knowledge that will be the key to the development of science. Accordingly, the possession of advanced technologies and high scientific potential of the country will lead it to a high level of development.

As we see, a whole range of problems in the field of education is dictated by the era of globalization. So, the rapid "aging" of knowledge, the need to use new technologies in all areas, regardless of profession, force a person:

- To acquire throughout life all the new knowledge that allows being competitive in the labor market, to easily “adapt” to the demands of the time;

- To acquire knowledge in the field of information and communication technologies, as well as be able to improve them, regardless of specialization.

As for Iran, in this issue, there is absolute unreadiness of the Iranian side to full cooperation with Kazakhstan. It would seem that the lifting of sanctions from the country at the beginning of 2016 should have given a new impetus to significant, decisive steps in foreign policy, in particular to cooperation with Kazakhstan in the field of education and science, primarily as a neighboring country. Moreover, during the meetings and talks of Bolashak program representatives with the Iranian side regarding the organization and holding of an educational exhibition in Tehran in autumn 2017, the latter declared about unreadiness to hold that event due to its contradiction to Iran’s policy, specific in expediency of Iranian youth leaving for study abroad. This begs the question: what policy? Policy of “comprehensive isolation”? It turns out that the state limits the “leave” of young people who have the goal of receiving education abroad, to learn from their experience and apply it for the good of their country?

2. METHODOLOGY

Today, the Al-Farabi Kazakh National University has valid agreements with some universities and institutes of Iran (Table 1). Of these, the agreement with Tehran and Muha Gek Ardabali University was not prolonged due to the disinterest of both parties. With regard to the Treaty on the provision of financial assistance for the study of Persian language students of the KazNU by the Saadi Foundation, negotiations are ongoing between the parties on its prolongation. Within its framework, seven students studying for a fee at the Iranian Studies Department of the Kazakh National University, the Cultural Center of the Embassy and the Saadi Foundation annually provided cash assistance in the amount of 1,000 euros and paid 50% of the tuition.

Table 1. Cooperation Agreement Al-Farabi KazNU with Iranian institutions

Name of institution	Agreement	Contract duration
Tehran University	Memorandum of Understanding	20.01.09-20.01.14
Center for Iranian Studies	Cooperation Agreement	7.05.12 (unlimited)
Muha Hack Ardabali University	Memorandum of Understanding	22.05.12-22.05.17
Institute for Humanities and Cultural Studies	Cooperation Agreement	18.12.14-18.12.19
Shahid Beheshti University	Memorandum of Understanding	2014-19
Research Institute Schahez Pazhu	Memorandum of Understanding	29.12.15-29.12.20

Institute for Humanities and Cultural Studies	Cooperation Agreement	4.04.16 (unlimited)
Cultural Center of the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Kazakhstan, Saadi Foundation	Agreement on the provision of financial assistance for studying Persian language students of the Al-Farabi KazNU	21.03.2016- 21.03.2017

Currently, in the framework of the Cooperation Agreement with the Shahid Beheshti University, Dr. Abdolomia Chenari, Professor of the Persian Language and Literature Department at the Shahid Beheshti University, conducts classes in Persian at the Faculty of Oriental Studies of the Kazakh National University. And also from the abovementioned university was received a proposal to send 2 doctoral students to the faculties of biology and chemistry of the KazNU for a scientific internship to extract rare elements. In 2017, 1 doctoral student and 1 representative of the teaching staff of the Iranian Studies Department underwent an internship in Tehran.

April 4, 2016, in the framework of the III Farabi Forum, the Al-Farabi Kazakh National University was visited by foreign partners from the Islamic Culture and Relations Organization (ICRO) (Iran), Shahid Beheshti University and Cambridge University (United Kingdom). The issues of cooperation in the framework of the “Iran-Turan” project were discussed. According to the results of the visit, a roadmap for the implementation of the “Iran-Turan” project was developed with a detailed description of the activities carried out within the framework of this project.

In the framework of the “Iran-Turan” project, the following projects were delivered to the Iranian side:

1. “Development of environmental ethics based on scientific and religious approaches for further implementation in a broad education;
2. “Significance and place of “Seljukname” in Kazakhstan and Central Asia;
3. “Formation of statehood: Iranian and Kazakhstan models;
4. Characteristics of a research project “The world of “Shakhname” in the Turkic written literature;
5. “Turkish ethnos in Iran: history and current time”.

Also, in the framework of the III Farabi Forum, the Faculty of Oriental Studies of the Kazakh National University together with the Shahid Beheshti University held the international scientific conference “Kazakhstan and Iran: in search of spiritual and cultural integration.”

Director of the Center for Iranian Studies G. Zhumadilova during her visit to Iran from August 21 to September 4, 2016, presented the proposed projects to scientific-research centers and organizations of Iran.

Also, during the meeting with the Ambassador of the Republic of Kazakhstan in the IRI Amreev B., these projects and the issues of their financing were discussed. The first Secretary of the Embassy

Dusebayev D. was instructed to assist in finding partners for funding projects.

The Director of the Iranian Center Zhumadilova G. met with the President of the Islamic Culture and Relations Organization Abbas Kameyar, where the President offered to finance these projects on a parity basis - 50% at the expense of Kazakhstan and 50% at the expense of Iran.

A. Yasawi International Kazakh-Turkish University in Turkestan city also interacts with the Cultural representation of Iran on the basis of the Cooperation Agreement of 2016.

With Gumilyov Eurasian National University was signed several documents:

- Memorandum between the Department of Religious Studies of the Faculty of Social Sciences of the Gumilyov ENU and the Cultural representation of the IRI Embassy, Astana, 2015;
- Agreement between the Department of Religious Studies of the Faculty of Social Sciences and the Cultural representation of Iran on the development of cooperation and relations in the field of science, education and culture, Astana, June 2015;
- Memorandum of understanding between Gumilyov Eurasian National University and Allameh Tabataba'i University, 15 June 2016.

Jointly with the Kazakh State Law University, the Cultural Center of Iran holds round tables, meetings, but the relationship is not legally enshrined in contracts.

The agreement on the establishment of a Persian Language Center at the Kazakh State Women's Pedagogical University with the Iranian Cultural Center concluded on September 2012, also provides for scientific-research cooperation with this university, financial support for organizing scientific internships, etc.

“Ablai Khan Kazakh University of International Relations and World Languages” JSC had several cooperation agreements with the Iran Cultural Center, but the agreements have not been prolonged until now “due to the fact that the signing was not initiated by both parties.” Among them is an agreement on financial support for Persian language faculty students at the University signed in 2015.

Among the main tasks of the Cultural Center of the Embassy of Iran in Kazakhstan is to present the modern Islamic Republic of Iran, an acquaintance of Kazakhstan society with the basics and achievements of the Islamic revolution and the structure of Iran, as well as history, culture, traditions, literature and art of Persian civilization. In order to carry out these tasks, the Cultural Center conducts extensive cooperation activities with state, scientific, educational, religious and cultural institutions.

In the framework of bilateral international agreements and the above agreements with various institutions, the activities of the IRI's Cultural Center in Kazakhstan in the field of education include:

- Conducting joint international scientific and practical conferences, training seminars, round tables, master classes with universities, museums, libraries and other institutions of Kazakhstan;
- Publication of monographs, materials of international conferences, textbooks, books, and dictionaries;
- Implementation of programs for the exchange of teaching staff, students and training of Kazakhstan students and teachers in special programs of Iran;
- Providing an opportunity for students from Kazakhstan to participate in educational scholarship programs for Masters and Doctoral studies in Iranian universities;
- Opening of Iranian studies centers in the universities of Kazakhstan and support for its activities;
- Inviting and financial support of Iranian professors for teaching at Kazakhstan universities;
- Training of specialists of the National Archive of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the National Academic Library of the Republic of Kazakhstan (Nur-Sultan) and the National Library of the Republic of Kazakhstan (Almaty) for the restoration of manuscripts.

If we talk about cooperation in the field of science between the two countries, it is impossible to mention noticeable movement here. In December 2014, the rector of Al-Farabi KazNU Galimkair Mutanov visited Shahid Beheshti University on an official visit, during which he

met with the main representatives of the university, visited the Center for Communications and Telescopes, the Plasma Research Center, the Laboratory of Genetic Analysis (DNA), the Fayber Optik Research Center. As is evident from Table 1, the Memorandum of Understanding was signed with the Shahid Beheshti University and the Research Institute of Political Science and Cultural Studies, but no agreement was reached on the implementation of any research project with any research center or laboratory.

3. RESULTS

In Nur-Sultan, on September 10, 2017, the First Summit of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation in Science and Technology was held, which took part 15 heads of state and government of the OIC countries-participants, as well as representatives of international and regional organizations. The OIC program was adopted until 2026, containing 12 key development priorities. The event allowed to determine priorities, goals, and objectives in the field of science, technology, and innovation in the member countries of the Organization, but it is too early to talk about concrete steps, and even more so, about the results of cooperation between Kazakhstan and Iran in this field.

Among the problems existing in the relationship of higher education and science spheres:

- The presence of not enough developed legal framework,
- Passivity in the renewal of existing agreements between universities and institutes of Kazakhstan and Iran;
- Unattractive learning conditions;
- Fear of potential students not to find work in their specialty;
- Lack of information in the Kazakh, Russian, partly English languages about existing training programs in Iran and in general about the internal situation in the country;
- Lack of a focused policy of cooperation development;
- The passivity of diplomats of both countries;
- Absence / weak PR promotion of its history, culture, language;
- The lack of specialists who speak Persian;
- The lack of joint research projects that bring high economic profit;
- Instability in the region, neighboring states of Iran;
- Sanctions policy against Iran;
- The closeness of the country (Iran), a feature of the foreign policy mentality;
- The internal political structure of the country (Islamic state of the Shiite sense);
- Lack of demand for Iranian education in the Republic of Kazakhstan;

- Preference by Kazakhstan citizens to Russian or Western education.

To deal with the problems listed above, of course, several measures were taken, including:

1. Development of the official website of the Cultural representation of the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the Republic of Kazakhstan: February 2017 - in Russian, November 2017 - in Kazakh;
2. Conclusion of cooperation agreements between universities of Iran and Kazakhstan;
3. A trip of the Kazakh delegation (representatives of universities of the Republic of Kazakhstan, JSC “Center for International Programs”) to Iran in autumn 2017.

However, issues related to instability in the region and other foreign policy factors beyond parties’ control.

The results of the steps taken to solve the problems:

1. Insufficient development of the website of the Cultural representation of the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the Republic of Kazakhstan, the inconsistency of actions (the difference in content in Farsi, Kazakh and Russian languages);
2. a) Exchange of students and teaching staff at a low level;

b) Organization of scientific conferences, seminars, round tables at a sufficiently high level

3. a) Conclusion of new cooperation agreements between universities of Iran and Kazakhstan;

b) The management of the Bolashak Program is not planning to include Iranian universities in the list of universities recommended for the study of the winners of the competition to award the Bolashak international scholarship for 2018 due to the fact that Iranian universities do not occupy top positions in the global university rankings.

The solution to these problems is seen by the author as follows:

- Extension of existing contracts of interest to both parties and the conclusion of new ones;
- Revision of policy tactics in the field of higher education and science by both countries;
- Awareness by both sides and acceptance of the fact of the presence of a particular foreign policy mentality of the partner country;
- Holding meetings in the spring-summer period with schoolchildren, applicants to attract people willing to study Iranian direction in Kazakhstan's universities in order to increase the number of Iranian specialists, translators of the Persian language;
- Active agitation of students to study in Iran in the masters or doctoral studies;
- Assistance to graduates of the Iranian Studies department in job search in their specialty;
- Development of a program for obtaining two-diploma education at universities;

- The motivation of Iran studies students, including material (the issuance of scholarships for students of a paid department and an additional allowance to the initial scholarship of students studying for a grant; the provision of additional places for those wishing to undergo an internship in Iran);
- Allocation of grants for the development of joint research projects in areas of interest to both parties (medicine, chemistry, physics and mathematics, nanotechnology, robotics, light and food industries, agriculture and others).

Thus, until Kazakhstan and Iranian parties sort out priorities in cooperation in the field of science and higher education, do not decide on the need of exchange experience, the state of cooperation in this area will remain at the same level as today.

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