ABSTRACT

of the dissertation by Zhorabek Zhuldyz Gaifurkyzy on the topic «Post-islamism: The Evolution of Political Islam», submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) under the educational program «8D02204 – Islamic Studies»

General characteristics of the research. The proposed doctoral dissertation research aims at a comprehensive Islamic studies analysis of the evolutionary patterns of political Islam under the conditions of contemporary globalization and digitalization, the regional specificities of the «post-islamism» phenomenon, and the processes of forming its unique «soft model» within Kazakhstani society.

Motivation of the research topic.

In the contemporary era, political Islam continues to play a significant role in the socio-political life of many countries, while simultaneously undergoing substantial qualitative changes. Following the peak of islamism in the second half of the twentieth century, a transformation of islamist ideologies and movements is observed at the current stage. According to experts, islamism is experiencing a period of profound evolution; however, the nature and directions of these changes remain insufficiently researched.

The term «post-islamism» represents an attempt to understand the condition of islamism after its initial revolutionary momentum has been exhausted. New trends are observed in several Muslim societies: islamist parties and movements are revising their goals and rhetoric, seeking to combine commitment to Islamic values with the demands of pluralistic democracy.

Thus, the study of the post-islamism phenomenon is relevant not only from a theoretical perspective for understanding the evolution of religious-political ideologies, but also in a practical dimension: it enables the analysis of the transformation of political regimes and public sentiments in the Muslim world under the conditions of globalization and post-secularity.

Degree of study of the thesis topic.

The phenomenon of post-islamism and the process of political Islam's transformation constitute a complex issue that stands at the center of attention in contemporary domestic and foreign humanities. A fundamental role in shaping the theoretical foundation of this research was played by the works of sociologist A. Bayat, who first introduced this term into scientific discourse in 1996 to describe the pragmatic shift following the Islamic revolution in Iran. He conceptualized post-islamism not as a rejection of Islam, but as an «alternative modernism» project that combines religious faith with individual rights, pluralism, and the demands of modernity.

Although the phenomenon of post-islamism has not been specifically and comprehensively studied within the domestic context, the works of leading Kazakhstani scholars are of paramount importance for understanding its prerequisites and theoretical foundations. Professor N. L. Seidakhmetova, A. Muminov, N. Zh. Baitenova, K. K. Begalinova, D. Kenzhetay, and B. M.

Satershinov have demonstrated the significance of examining the axiological issues of traditional Islam and Islamic civilization as a dynamic system. Furthermore, issues regarding the religious situation, radicalization, legal processes, public consciousness, and identity in the country are reflected in the works of such researchers as A. Sabdin, K. M. Bishmanov, A. D. Kurmanalieva, B. B. Meirbaev, and S. O. Abzhalov. Overall, while the theoretical and conceptual framework of the topic is extensive, comprehensive comparative-empirical analyses covering multiple regions simultaneously remain insufficient. Drawing upon the insights of established academic schools, this doctoral dissertation research aims to fill these gaps and unravel the essence of post-islamism in greater depth.

Research object – The object of the research is the evolutionary processes of political Islam in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.

Research subject – the subject of the research examines the ideological structure, stages of historical development, transformational mechanisms of the phenomenon of contemporary political Islam (islamism), and the interconnection of internal and external factors in the process of its transition to post-islamism.

Purpose and tasks of the research.

The purpose of the research is a comprehensive analysis of the post-islamism phenomenon as a stage in the evolution of political Islam, identifying its essential characteristics, prerequisites of emergence, and the diversity of its forms across various regional contexts, as well as assessing the significance of this phenomenon within contemporary religious-political discourse.

To achieve the purpose, the following asks were set forth in the course of the study:

- to examine the genesis of the concept of «post-islamism» in scientific literature, considering the primary definitions and interpretations proposed by various researchers (A. Bayat, O. Roy, G. Kepel);
- to conduct a comparative analysis of post-islamism with interrelated concepts of political Islam;
- to analyze the development path of political Islam in the second half of the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, identifying the stages of formation, rise, and subsequent crisis of Islamist ideologies;
- to identify the key factors contributing to the transition from islamism to post-islamism;
- to pay special attention to how contemporary processes of globalization and informatization affect the transformation of religious-political identities;
- to analyze the impact of the post-islamist turn on the political life of Muslim societies;
- to investigate the manifestations and variants of post-islamism in different countries; to determine the common features and specific characteristics of post-islamist movements in each context, including an analysis of examples of parties and political leaders who have transformed their ideology.

Theoretical and methodological basis of the research.

To implement the set purposes and tasks, the following theoretical and methodological approaches were applied:

The comparative-political method was used to compare different countries and movements;

The historical method was employed to examine the evolution of islamism and post-islamism ideas over time;

The sociological approach was introduced to study the transformation of religious identities;

The research is based on the principles of historicity and complexity (systemic approach): post-islamism is viewed because of specific historical processes and as an integral part of the system of relations between religion and politics. Content analysis methods are applied to the ideological documents and rhetoric (program statements, leaders' speeches) of Islamic movements to identify shifts occurring within their discourse. The comparative approach enables the identification of common patterns and differences of post-islamist manifestations across various regions.

Scientific novelty of the research.

Reflected in a comprehensive approach to analyzing post-islamism as a global religious-political phenomenon: unlike previous studies where post-islamism was examined through isolated cases or limited aspects, this dissertation systematically and comparatively investigates the phenomenon based on extensive geographical material. For the first time, the evolution of Islamist movements in several regions (the Middle East, North Africa, Asia, and the post-Soviet space) has been comparatively analyzed within a unified conceptual framework.

Demonstrated through the application of interdisciplinary approaches: the integration of post-secularism ideas and globalization theory into the analysis of political Islam has enabled the identification of previously overlooked interconnections between the transformation of religious ideologies and global socio-cultural processes.

Identified the dynamic patterns of two contrasting regional models of post-islamist transformation: a comparative analysis was conducted for the first time between the characteristics of the Iranian «reform within islamism» model, fully implemented at the state level under the pressure of «bottom-up» social mobilization in a context of power transition, and the pragmatic shift of the Turkish AKP's governance from «conservative democracy» to «neoliberal islamism» and «Muslim nationalism», thereby proving that these are dynamic rather than static phenomena.

Conceptualized the phenomenon of «digital post-islamism» in contemporary information society and the mechanisms of privatization of religious identity: the study uncovers the mechanisms behind the formation of online religiosity in virtual spaces and the processes through which religion transcends traditional institutional boundaries, shifting toward individual choice via new media platforms (Instagram, TikTok, YouTube), where youth perceive religion not as a rigid political ideology, but as a comfortable lifestyle.

Conceptually substantiated a unique «soft model» of Kazakhstani post-islamism by systematizing religious-social processes within the domestic context: factors such as the lack of direct influence of the Islamic factor on state political power in the country, the role of religion as a moral-ethical compass in society, and the rapid development of the halal industry were comprehensively analyzed.

Scientific provisions submitted for defense:

1. Political Islam (Islamism) is a complex socio-political phenomenon that entails the integration of religious faith and political power, viewing Islam as an ideological instrument for restructuring socio-political institutions. Its theoretical foundations emerged from the synthesis of traditional theological principles and modern political technologies, forming a system of concepts aimed at making religion the primary law of state governance.

2. The evolution and internal-external transformation of Islamism occurred under the direct influence of such factors as pressure from authoritarian regimes, socio-economic crises, globalization processes, and Western geopolitical influences. These factors not only generated waves of radicalization but also forced a reassessment of the ideological boundaries of political Islam.

3. The practical failures of Islamism in seizing or maintaining state power, public demand for democratic and secular values, and the modernization of society led to the crisis of political Islam. This situation created objective prerequisites for moving beyond the framework of Islamism toward a post-Islamist paradigm that views the relationship between religion and politics on a new level.

4. Post-Islamism represents a qualitatively new evolutionary stage of an ideological and institutional nature, serving as a logical result of the historical crisis and the exhaustion of the energetic potential of political Islam. It is characterized not as a rejection of Islam or simple secularization, but as a transition from narrow religious rhetoric to the language of rights and freedoms, abandoning violence and the monopoly on absolute truth in favor of an «alternative modernism» project that combines religious faith with pluralistic, democratic values.

5. Under conditions of contemporary globalization, post-secularism, and transnational processes, the transformation of political Islam is determined through the interconnection of internal and external factors. Internally, the shift of Islamist parties from a revolutionary course to reformist models has had an impact; externally, global market capitalism, informational influence, and geopolitical conjuncture compel religious-political organizations to make pragmatic compromises. The transition of Tunisia's «Ennahda» party to the concept of Muslim democracy is a clear manifestation of this global regularity.

6. Regional models of the post-Islamist turn are not static phenomena; they possess a dynamic and contradictory character depending on local historical and political processes. The Iranian case demonstrates a model of social pressure directed «from the bottom up» under conditions of power transit, following the «reform within Islamism» fully implemented at the level of a theocratic state; whereas the experience of the AKP (Justice and Development Party) in Turkey defines a flexible tactical model adapted to political conjuncture, which gradually transforms from «conservative democracy» into «new liberal Islamism» and pragmatic «Muslim nationalism».

7. The information society and the process of digitalization have led to the «privatization» of religious identity, shaping the contemporary phenomenon of «digital post-Islamism» (cyber-Islam). The movement of religion beyond traditional institutional boundaries into virtual space through new media platforms (Instagram,

TikTok, YouTube) has transformed the religious consciousness of youth. At the present stage, Islam is perceived not as a strict political-ideological doctrine, but as a convenient lifestyle based on personal choice, business ethics, halal culture adapted to market laws, and consumer trends.

8. The religious and social processes unfolding in contemporary Kazakhstani society differ from classical post-Islamism which was generated by the collapse of an Islamist political regime and are characterized by their own unique «soft model». The main feature of this model is that the factor of Islam does not directly influence state power and political institutions; instead, religion at the public level performs exclusively moral-ethical and cultural-spiritual guiding functions and manifests actively in socio-economic segments such as the halal industry and Islamic finance.

9. The Kazakhstani model of post-Islamism is a unique secularly adapted" and state-regulated from above» phenomenon formed within the framework of the state's secular policy, legal regulation mechanisms, and national cultural control. The evolution of the religious situation in the country is defined by the transition of radical ideologies from the loss of public support to non-political forms of religiosity. This trend creates prerequisites for the establishment of a pragmatic religious consciousness that does not contradict state stability and secular values, and harmoniously combines with traditional cultural foundations.

Approbation of the research results.

The scientific results of the dissertation were presented at academic and scientific-practical conferences and published in scholarly journals. The research findings have been documented in 8 scientific publications, including: 2 articles indexed in the Scopus database, 2 papers published in scientific journals recommended by the Committee for Quality Assurance in the Field of Science and Higher Education of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Republic of Kazakhstan, and 3 papers in the proceedings of international scientific and practical conferences, 1 of which was published in a foreign collection.

Disputation of the research.

The dissertation was discussed at the extended meeting of the Department of Religious Studies and Cultural Studies and the Department of Philosophy of the Faculty of Philosophy and Political Science, of the Kazakh National University named after Al-Farabi (Protocol No.14) on 29 May 2026.

Structure and scope of the thesis.

The research paper consists of an introduction, three parts, a conclusion, list of references.