

# Central Asia and Kazakhstan: In Search of Civic Identity

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**Abstract**—Mankind has entered into an extremely complex and controversial stage of its development: the world is simultaneously organized and chaoticized, globalized and localized, combined and split. Analysts point out that globalization as a process of strengthening economic, cultural, financial and other ties of states cause many problems. In the economic sphere, it creates the danger of growing gap between the states, in the sphere of politics it leads to the weakening of political power and influence of nation-states.

**Keywords**—Civic identity, globalization, identity crisis, culture identity

## I. INTRODUCTION

GLOBALIZATION exacerbates the problem of preservation of ethnic and cultural heritage. Some of the barriers, primarily geographic are destroyed. Strengthening of the financial, cultural and information links makes ineffective attempts to autarky, self-isolation and preservation in an unaltered form “a single national culture”.

But this is the paradox – instead of the old broken barriers there emerge the new ones. The problem is that the local nationalism and ethnic revival generate under the pressure of globalization.

Analysts say that in Europe, along with the formation of a single stable and meaningful identity emerged and expanding anti-globalization and the concomitant ethnic separatism. In all the economic troubles anti-globalists tend to blame the foreign workers, migrant workers - people with different language, different ethnic and racial identity. Emphasis on the problem of aliens, restrictions on the rights of foreigners, highlighting the slogans of the protection of national identity and even the use of violence to ethnically and racially alien groups has become typical for the countries of the European Union.

What we observe in Europe, even more evident in the post-Soviet space nowadays. The CIS states and the political elite face extremely contradictory objectives. . On the one hand is the task of building the nation-state - a strong and independent, on the other hand is the integration into the global market.

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On the one hand, focus on the creation of modern institutions of democracy, on the other hand is the “resistance of the material”, the bureaucratic procedures. On the one hand, the declaration of the need of entering the new information society, on the other hand is inability of the political and economic elite to give adequate answers to the challenges of post-industrial globalized world. It is clear that the development of the negative aspects of the controversial process poses a threat of destabilization and can cause damage to inter-ethnic harmony.

Symptoms of the desire to preserve national identity may lead to negative results, visible in many former Soviet states.

Two extremes, corresponding to the dominance of either exogenous or endogenous factors are cosmopolitanism, ignoring of such values as motherland and the national state, and isolationism. Both extremes are some kind of reaction to globalism and require focused analysis and the development of adequate measures of counteraction from the state and civil society institutions. For the extreme points of view is typical either substitution of national identity for a surrogate or a lack of thereof.

## II. GLOBALIZATION AND IDENTITY CRISIS

Mankind has entered into an extremely complex and controversial stage of its development: the world is simultaneously organized and chaoticized, globalized and localized, combined and split. Analysts point out that globalization as a process of strengthening economic, cultural, financial and other ties of states cause many problems. In the economic sphere, it creates the danger of growing gap between the states, in the sphere of politics it leads to the weakening of political power and influence of nation-states.

Some of the barriers, primarily geographic are destroyed. Strengthening of the financial, cultural and information links makes ineffective attempts to autarky, self-isolation and preservation in an unaltered form “a single national culture”. But this is the paradox – instead of the old broken barriers there emerge the new ones. The problem is that the local nationalism and ethnic revival generate under the pressure of globalization. Ethnocentrism is rather typical outcome of globalization in the world, where contrasts exist, and it is connected with awareness in preserving national identity. However, the concept of nation is identified with native ethnoses. This approach is observed in both developed and developing countries. Analysts say that in Europe, along with the formation of a single stable and meaningful identity emerged and expanded anti-globalization and the concomitant ethnic separatism. In all the economic troubles anti-globalists tend to blame the foreign workers, migrant workers - people with different language, different ethnic and racial identity.

Emphasis on the problem of aliens, restrictions on the rights of foreigners, highlighting the slogans of the protection of national identity and even the use of violence to ethnically and racially alien groups has become typical for the countries of the European Union.

What we observe in Europe, even more evident in the post-Soviet space nowadays. The CIS states and the political elite face extremely contradictory objectives. On the one hand is the task of building the national state - a strong and independent, on the other hand is the integration into the global market. On the one hand, focus on the creation of modern institutions of democracy, on the other hand is the "resistance of the material," the bureaucratic procedures. On the one hand, the declaration of the need of entering the new information society, on the other hand is inability of the political and economic elite to give adequate answers to the challenges of post-industrial globalized world. It is clear that the development of the negative aspects of the controversial process poses a threat of destabilization and can cause damage to inter-ethnic harmony.

Symptoms of the desire to preserve national identity may lead to negative results, are visible in many former Soviet states.

For example, in Russia, especially in the context of the global financial crisis, there is the tendency to blame in all the economic troubles for so-called "Caucasian" or even "Asian" ethnicity. A negative attitude is formed towards "guest" workers, emigrants, mainly from the "near abroad", the traders in urban markets, etc.

Two extremes, corresponding to the dominance of either exogenous or endogenous factors are cosmopolitanism, ignoring of such values as motherland and the nation-state, and isolationism. Both extremes are some kind of reaction to globalism and require focused analysis and the development of adequate measures of counteraction from the state and civil society institutions. For the extreme points of view is typical either substitution of national identity for a surrogate or a lack of thereof.

In this regard, one should pay attention to the fact that isolationism is often accompanied by the idea of building a society on the model of family or community. Those who are nostalgic for such a model do not understand that such a society in the modern world is not able to maintain its independence and that it threatens the society by going back into a real archaic, failure into such state, which leads to fundamentalism.

In these circumstances, it is important not becoming isolated from the outside world, organically fit into the world's cultural, educational and scientific space without losing the national identity.

Strengthening the institutions of civil society and state is needed in the formation of appropriate attitudes and behavioral acts that contribute to an effective solution of this problem.

### III. CIVIC OR CULTURAL IDENTITY?

In the post-Soviet period, as in all the turning points of history, there is inevitably an identity crisis. It covers several areas. First, there is a crisis of confidence in the government.

Second, there is a crisis of confidence in the new institutions and procedures. Third, it is the collapse of the old system of values and ideals, feverish search for a new spiritual support.

Identity crisis takes a particularly acute form in the new independent states, formed in the result of the collapse of empires and the major geopolitical shocks. For multi-ethnic societies, identity crisis, that is the awareness of belonging to a new nation-state, has become one of the most pressing problems. Identity crisis is largely affected citizens who are not only representatives of the titular nation, but also representatives of other ethnic groups. The first years of the construction of the Kazakh state coincided with a powerful awakening of ethnic consciousness in the post-soviet area. Actually, these processes have become one of the main reasons for the demise of most socialist states. The characteristic features of the political transition of states are the development of negative tendencies associated with social conflicts, some of which are ethnic tensions. It is necessary to consider that in the process of establishing a new lifestyle and way of life, as well as during the transition from one method of ruling to the other the usual mechanism of functioning of the whole society is violated, and this leads to a confrontation among some social groups. This is perfectly a legitimate political process, inherent to all transit countries. In this context, we can consider recent developments in different regions of the country which have found inter-ethnic color.

Globalization is the strongest challenge to national and cultural identity, where a dialogue of cultures is the primary means of overcoming that. The combination of modernization with preservation of their own cultural heritage, features of the national spirit, the mentality, the adaptation of traditional institutions and cultural values to the changing world is the response of any country on the challenges of globalization.

Central Asian civilization has its own generic and specific features. The thousand-year history of peoples and their cultural heritage has influenced on this. In a broad historical and typological perspective Central Asia has its own unique identity, which consists of a set of structuring identities.

First of all, this is the Eurasian identity, which is the result of interaction and conflict, as many faiths and cultures so civilizations of the world. All linear and nonlinear history of culture of the peoples of Central Asia testifies to this. Moreover, the Eurasian identity in this case can not be reduced to the idea of Russian Eurasianism, with its geopolitically-oriented content. This unique formation that provides the diversity, interaction and dialogue between cultures, ethnic and religious communities in the frames of a holistic historical, civilizational and geopolitical formation is a big, not realized potential. Indeed, it is time to update and actualize the fruitful idea of the Eurasian community of new nations and to analyze the possibility of forming a new integrative Eurasian identity, which has much deeper roots and the basic value foundations than the emerging pan-European identity. Formation of Eurasian identity will contribute to the consolidation of society and the realization of common development strategy in Central Asia.

*Civilizational identity, which is varied within the following typological characteristics*

1. Religious (early forms of religion, which have common roots and basically, Islamic and Christian civilizations);

2. Nomadic, semi-nomadic and sedentary types of civilization;

3. Cultural orientation and the diffusion of the ancient civilizations of the Middle East and Turan;

4. Civilization format of the Soviet period of the peoples of Central Asia;

5. Civilization format of post-Soviet period in Central Asia (traditional, industrial and post-industrial civilization, these forms can be observed in modern times).

Involvement of Asia, which is understood not in geographical but in value-semantic perspective is one of the components of the Central Asian identity. However, it is difficult to agree with the assertion that for the Asian self-identity of the peoples of Central Asia is enough to realize their belonging to Asia. Because Asia is as nonhomogeneous as in the socio-cultural so in civilized aspects.

In fact, Central Asia as a single region has started to position itself only after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Today, we can consider it as a sub-continent and in the future - as a relatively independent super-region (assuming the coincidence of interests of all peoples of Central Asia, forming the consciousness of their cultural and civilizational identity as belonging to a single perspective and powerful region). And this requires a complex and operational work on the formation of a scientifically developed concept of Asian civilization. For the transformation of Central Asia into modern civilization with an integrated regional cultural civilizational ideology it is necessary to: to create poly-national and ethno-cultural certainty and civic identity; to build strong tradition of freedom of conscience, to form a complementary tradition of inter-ethnic interaction, to foster a culture of tolerance, to create a platform for cultural and civilizational dialogue.

Of course, our civilization must be based not only on the development of new technologies of the raw materials extraction, processing, on the introduction and use of electronic means of communication, but also caring for their culture and cultural values in general. Cultural identity it is a complex process that does not suffer mechanical or mandatory transfer of ethnicity to culture: it must be connected with the life of society, with its cultural and spiritual needs.

*The two sides of cultural identity:* self-identity or external identity work today to survive in a global struggle. Today it is evident that globalization from the unilateral policy on the powerful domination of man-made culture and crisis of identity should proceed to the dialogue of cultures.

#### IV. FEATURES OF CIVIC IDENTITY IN KAZAKHSTAN

Kazakhstan has historically become the place of mutual enrichment of civilizations, the interpenetration of cultural models, and the community of diverse peoples. It is a poly-confessional state and its development in any case due to this fact as a reality from which you can not dissociate. In connection with this the problems of Kazakhstan science are defined by a set of internal and external factors, which occur during construction of the state and the country's integration into the global system. In search of the ways to approach the Central Asian states, as well as the Muslim world and the West, scientific and intellectual community should play an

important role along with the politicians. The desire to comprehend the changes taking place in their integrity and to promote the peaceful resolution of emerging problems lead researchers to make greater use of concepts such as "dialogue", "culture", "civilization".

The Republic of Kazakhstan is historically constituted multicultural country, where representatives of different ethnic and cultural groups inhabited for a long time. Friendly relations have long existed between the peoples of our country. In the similarity of the history, lifestyle, mentality the strong foundations are laid for a peaceful, tolerant coexistence. This allows us to consider the people living in Kazakhstan as the unified system of ethnic groups, as a kind of supra-ethnic social phenomenon. It became more noticeable recently in public places and in the speeches of President Nursultan Nazarbayev the use of such notion as a nation not in ethnic and cultural meaning, but in the sense of state, civil community - political nation.

But whether or not to stop on the achieved results? It seems that at present the preservation of social and political stability should be a priority for young sovereign Kazakhstan. Hence, in our view, the identification of a hierarchy of self-identification of Kazakh citizens, knowledge of psychological mechanisms to reflect cross-cultural interaction in ethnic group consciousness and the role of social-perceptual images as regulators of internal and external groups' activity becomes very important. As S.V. Ryzhova pointed out "Identity as a correlation with a certain group, generated a sense of belonging to this group, the sharing of its hopes and interests, it is a good tool to study the changes occurring in society" [1].

Therefore the problem of cross-cultural contacts and their effects stimulates a special interest in us - in scientists to study the psychological nature of identity, intercultural communication and intercultural tolerance. It is important to understand the socio-psychological nature of identity and intercultural processes occurring in multicultural society, contributing to or hindering tolerant intercultural interaction in order to answer the questions of whether there is a cause of intolerance in Kazakh society, and is there a way of preventing intercultural conflicts in order to develop adequate strategic thinking allowing to determine the long-term state policy. Constitutionally approving itself as a "democratic, secular, legal and social state the highest values of which is the man, his life, rights and freedoms" (Article 1, paragraph 1), Kazakhstan has to build a society where regardless of ethnic, religious, language and identity of the individual and associated with them cultural traditions - the common Kazakh "culture, law and morality based on secular values, would provide conditions for the approval of the type of personality inherent in civil society and civic nation - a free, independent, individually responsible and tolerant person that has a sense of dignity, honor and duty" [2].

#### V. CONCLUSION

The formation and development of civil society at each historical stage as a society of citizens of high social, economic, political, cultural and moral status, creating developed legal relationships together with the state – "this is, in principle, an endless process of improving society,

government, politics and human covering all aspects of life, as well as the processes to achieve freedom, equality, justice and other social, political, moral and cultural values" [3].

But with all the infinity of the eternal perfection still there is the foundation that can determine the degree of perfection: it is the level of democracy, democracy of power and politics.

Such detailed, though a brief review of approaches to the definition of democracy and identification of the main characteristics of civil society, in our opinion, is necessary firstly, to try to determine what form of democracy is in Kazakhstan in the period of building of civil society. And, secondly, without it is impossible to identify and justify the attitude of our citizens to the ongoing transformation.

On the first issue, we are of the opinion that today civil society is formed through democracy of social cohesion in Kazakhstan.

This was fundamental to identify the realities and prospects for the formation of civic identity in poly-ethnic and multi-confessional conditions.

Many studies have shown that group identity is associated with a positive attitude towards the representatives of different ethnic groups. Thus, positive civic identity improves social interaction.

It facilitates individual self-esteem and national pride, therefore, the desire to work on the development of their country; without doubt it is the key to the stability of the state. The most important point is that the positive civic identity unifies and unites the people, which is the primary condition for the prosperity of multicultural society as Kazakhstan.

Of course, in the frames of one article it is impossible to give a conceptually clear and complete picture of a human of civil society. Thus, we should take into consideration that civil society in Kazakhstan is still in the initial stage of its genesis. But we think we can already identify some types of different ethnic and social groups in contemporary realities.

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