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FORMATION OF NATIONAL IDENTITY IN KAZAKHSTAN: CHALLENGES FOR THE STATE AND SOCIETY

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Abstract. This article examines the peculiarities of the formation of national identity in Kazakhstan. The aim is to analyze dilemmas and challenges that require special attention from the state and society. The authors assess national identity in the context of two processes: on the one hand, in line with the processes of globalization and unification of world culture, on the other hand, through the prism of the growing desire of Kazakh society for national identification. This ambivalence affects the emerging national identity and is reflected in the reaction of society expressed in the public and media discourse of the country.

Keywords: *national identity, integration, political discourse, globalization, ethnic culture, language, national history.*

ҚАЗАҚСТАНДА ҰЛТТЫҚ БІРЕГЕЙЛІКТІҢ ҚАЛЫПТАСУЫ: МЕМЛЕКЕТ ПЕН ҚОҒАМ ҮШІН СЫН-ҚАТЕРЛЕР

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Андатпа. Бұл мақалада Қазақстанда ұлттық бірегейліктің қалыптасу ерекшеліктері зерттеледі. Мақсат-мемлекет пен қоғам тарапынан ерекше назар аударуды қажет

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ететін дилеммалар мен сын-қатерлерді талдау. Авторлар ұлттық бірегейлікті екі үдеріс контекстінде бағалайды: бір жағынан жаһандану және әлемдік мәдениетті біріздендіру үдерістеріне сәйкес, екінші жағынан, қазақстандық қоғамның ұлттық бірегейлікке деген ұмтылысының артуы арқылы. Бұл екіұштылық қалыптасып келе жатқан ұлттық бірегейлікке әсер етеді және елдің қоғамдық және медиа дискурсында көрсетілген қоғамның реакциясынан көрінеді.

Түйінді сөздер: ұлттық бірегейлік, интеграция, саяси дискурс, жаһандану, этникалық мәдениет, тіл, ұлттық тарих.

СТАНОВЛЕНИЕ НАЦИОНАЛЬНОЙ ИДЕНТИЧНОСТИ В КАЗАХСТАНЕ: ВЫЗОВЫ ДЛЯ ГОСУДАРСТВА И ОБЩЕСТВА

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Аннотация. В данной статье исследуются особенности становления национальной идентичности в Казахстане. Целью является анализ дилемм и вызовов, требующих особого внимания со стороны государства и общества. Авторы оценивают национальную идентичность в контексте двух процессов: с одной стороны, в русле процессов глобализации и унификации мировой культуры, с другой стороны, сквозь призму растущего стремления казахстанского общества к национальной идентификации. Эта амбивалентность влияет на формирующуюся национальную идентичность и отражается на реакции общества, выраженной в публичном и медийном дискурсе страны.

Ключевые слова: национальная идентичность, интеграция, политический дискурс, глобализация, этническая культура, язык, национальная история.

Introduction.

Many states and ethnic groups are in search of their own identity. The collapse of the Soviet Union led to profound changes in policy and practice regarding ethnic identity in the newly independent States, including Kazakhstan. In recent decades, the problem of national identity has come to the fore due to the desire of nations to strengthen political independence.

Identity is becoming increasingly important in the context of globalization, which contributes to the blurring of borders. Special attention should be paid to the fact that modern communication technologies allow purposefully influencing the processes

of national identity and constructing them in the direction desired by external actors. At the same time, "many ethnic groups face a difficult choice: either gradually abandon their traditional culture, or adapt to the changes taking place, but at the same time preserve their uniqueness" [1, p.41].

In particular, issues related to identity are becoming the subject of heated discussion in France, which, at first glance, should not have any problems with the state of national identification. However, in French society, these issues have become directly linked to the growth of immigration, setting the tone for political discussions in the country. In 2009, another broad public controversy began in

France, caused by the initiatives of the then Minister for Immigration Affairs E. Besson, when an instruction was sent throughout the country within three months (November 2009 -January 2010) to hold discussions on the topic "Values of national identity" with two key questions: "What does it mean to be French these days?" and "What is the contribution of immigration to national identity?" [2].

As you know, in the last century, the events of the Soviet period of history associated with political repression and "Asharshylyk", put the Kazakh ethnic group before the problem of losing its identity. Migration flows, socio-economic problems, the consequences of the Soviet Russification policy and other factors complicated the process of national identification of Kazakhstan. The multinational and multi-confessional population of Kazakhstan, which has developed due to these and other factors, has become a huge challenge for state policy regarding national identity.

The desire of the authorities to prevent confrontation in society creates a dilemma of state policy aimed at supporting ethnic Kazakh identity against the background of official discourse on the development of multicultural civil statehood, which complicates relations between Kazakhs and other ethnic groups living in Kazakhstan.

We also emphasize that the events taking place in our country in recent years actualize the problem of "pressure" of alternative identities in Kazakh society. These aspects of national identity require research related to the study of modern political history, aimed at a better understanding of modern society. Thus, the issue of national identity, or rather, the dilemmas and challenges in the way of its construction, has become noticeable in Kazakhstan.

Methodology.

In this study, the authors rely on a theoretical trend in international relations that emerged in the early 1990s - constructivism. The authors propose to consider the concept of national identity in the context of the ideas of constructivism developed by A. Wendt, N. Onuf and other theorists who study national identity in the process of social construction, considering it a product of the process of constant reconstruction [3]. Thus, the choice of a methodological approach is justified by the fact that the constructivist understanding of identity is based on the concept of social construction of reality.

In addition, for constructivists, national identity is linked to the interests of the national language, which is, from the point of view of J. Veldes, the official language [4, p.44]. According to these views, national identity, as well as its constituent language, cultural and religious values, political ideals, national historical memory, are created, i.e. constructed, by various actors, including the elite, representatives of different social and ethnic groups.

So, constructivists focus on discursive practices in the process of constructing identity, as well as on the relationship between identity and national interests, the features of the development of which in our country at the present stage will be taken into account in this article and, as the adherents of this theoretical trend themselves like to emphasize, will become an "analysis tool" for the authors.

In addition, conceptually productive is the approach to understanding the symbols of national history proposed by a group of French historians led by P. Nora, which emphasizes the role of the category of

memory and related concepts: "duty of memory", "places of memory" [5, p.7].

Discussion.

National-state identity can be defined as "a stable relationship of a person with a national community (both ethnically homogeneous and heterogeneous), the representation of which is the image of "We" as "an imaginary community supported through the institution of the state and the political and cultural tradition of statehood" [6, p.97]. As V.V. Titov notes, self-identification (including national) initially contains a powerful symbolic-associative impulse, i.e. it is symbolic in nature [6, p.98].

Of course, the process of national identity formation is determined by the dynamic interaction of the triad "images – values – symbols". One can agree with the Russian researcher T.V. Evgenieva that "the process of self-identification of a community acquires a complete form after the formation of a special system of symbols and rituals, through which self-identification of cultural, social or political communities occurs, symbolization of consciousness and ritualization of behavior, emotional and psychological fusion of the individual with the group is achieved" [7, p.76].

As stated by J.Veldes, a society cannot function if its members are not united by a common culture and idea, and this community is created by its political and intellectual elite, and is transmitted through the education system. He clarifies that this happens not only through the education system, but also through religious and cultural institutions, the media and the family. According to J.Veldes, the term "political and intellectual elites", means

political (for example, the leader of the country, the government, ideologists), bureaucratic (ministers), economic (energy lobby, representatives of the military-industrial complex), academic (experts and researchers), ethnic and regional (business community, religious and ethnic lobby, non-governmental organizations) elites. The content and direction of national identity is the result of a compromise reached between these groups [4, p.113].

However, different groups of actors can turn identity into a tool to protect their interests or strengthen their power.

In such a situation, the rhetoric of political elites is important, because through their official speeches and decisions, statesmen express the ideas of the nation, the meaning of its goals. It should be pointed out that communication between the authorities and society on the formation of national identity should reflect the fundamental values shared by society. Otherwise, it risks giving rise to false, sometimes dangerous, public expectations.

The position, first of all, of political elites, as a rule, depends on the status and assessment that a particular event of a particular national history will receive. Although, according to V.A. Achkasov, it would be a mistake to perceive the recipients of the elite narrative as its passive consumers, the processes of encoding and decoding the transmitted meanings and symbols do not always coincide, alternative versions of interpretation of the historical narrative broadcast by the elites may appear [8, p.23].

Our fundamental belief is that national identity has its roots in the depths of centuries, that it is the fruit of a very long history.

It is no coincidence that the three decades of independence in Kazakhstan have become a period of revision of key historical narratives. Today, it can be stated that the problem of historical memory has turned into a serious socio-political challenge.

We can agree with the Russian expert who believes that the memorial phenomenon is a certain political resource in a situation of severe socio-political gaps and changes. In conditions of economic crisis and in the absence of a real and clear program for future development, the state often seeks to turn memory into the main element of national consolidation [9, p.112].

In this regard, special attention should be paid to the formation of national symbols. These can be state symbols, personalities ("heroes" in history and modernity), symbols-ideas (political values with symbolic meaning), symbols-objects (historical monuments, architectural structures and other material objects).

At the symbolic level, by creating new "places of memory", as Pierre Nora suggested, politicians and society can participate in understanding those pages of national history that have been hushed up for a long time, work to restore national memory and, as a result, contribute to the formation of national identity.

One of the challenges for Kazakhstan is the lack of the necessary set of political ideals as a basis for individual identification with the state. Wanting to emphasize the central role of ethnicity in order to legitimize political mechanisms, political elites take a certain risk, since the country is ethnically diverse and has a relatively large proportion of the Russian/Russian-speaking population. At the same time, this is due to the fact that for individual politicians, the

ethnization of social discourse today allows them to strengthen their positions and thus influence their electorate.

It should also be noted that a significant challenge to the formation of national identity is that it is not dominant among the identification preferences of the population in certain parts of the country. As you know, the political dimension of a nation is universal, but it is formed in a certain geographical space. The concept of multi-component identity has firmly entered political science (there are ethno-cultural, regional, religious identities).

In the context of regional identity, we see that the regions of Kazakhstan in some cases differ sharply from each other in a number of parameters that are fundamental to the formation of a common Kazakh identity: the national composition of the population, religion, level and lifestyle, type of social ties, customs and traditions. Some Kazakhstanis identify themselves, first of all, as carriers of a certain ethnic origin. Russian Russians, in particular, can speak about the special identity of a number of the northern and eastern regions of the Republic of Kazakhstan, which are characterized by a mixed composition of the population and the predominance of the Russian language, and in some of them the Russian population prevails. At the same time, all of them are border regions with Russia.

The population of these regions is characterized by a mixed identity, since an individual often identifies himself in a natural national-cultural environment with its values and symbols.

For example, for the North Kazakhstan region of the Republic of Kazakhstan, with its polyethnicity with a predominance of the Russian population, differentiation of

identities is rather characteristic. The external cultural environment beyond the border is perceived by a part of the population as "its own", singling out carriers of a different ethno-cultural and linguistic identity. Thus, there is a synthesis and (or) competition of national-civic patterns with images and values of a different identity in the region. The lack of unity in the self-identification of the population can become accentuated in the event of changes in internal or external political conditions.

Of course, the "internal positioning" of Kazakhstanis is important, which includes the formation of Kazakhstan-wide values, the prestige of the state language, national culture, understanding of the peculiarities of the way of life and traditions of Kazakh society. In this context, the revival of ethno-cultural heritage and the preservation of cultural diversity in these regions can serve as a winning option. Polyethnicity can become an incentive in the development of culture and education. But these should not be one-time events dedicated to certain anniversaries, but consistently, steadily carried out cultural and educational activities that will take into account the socio-cultural and historical-psychological state of people.

An urgent challenge to the stable development of the Republic of Kazakhstan is the possibility of aggravation of interregional alienation due to political regionalization and differences in the geopolitical orientation of the population associated with interpretations of history and national identity.

As world experience shows, the borderlands can manifest their own special social and political quality. M. Williams suggests that in modern society loyalty is increasingly manifested not to the nation-state, but to religion, social groups and

political communities, and the essence of citizenship is becoming increasingly unstable in relation to territorial political identity [10, 421].

In this context, the border regions of Kazakhstan seem to be a fairly mobile space, since social processes sometimes go differently here. The presence of communities in the border area with characteristics that cannot be reduced to a common denominator, where the population demonstrates adherence to the culture of a neighboring country, can be perceived as a risk of disloyalty, separatist sentiments. Insufficient attention to the specific interests of the inhabitants of the border area, the peculiarities of local historical memory negatively affects the national identity. It is worth noting, in this regard, the weak use of socio-political technologies (PR, branding, media relations) at all levels of government. It is necessary to use national symbols (political, social, cultural, natural and others) to strengthen national identity.

But it should be emphasized that identity is a voluntary process, and people identify themselves with collective institutions only if they feel that they will benefit, for example, by gaining security or material well-being.

Let us cite as an example the experience of Austria, which has always been in the shadow of Germany, and only in 1955 acquired national sovereignty. In the early days of the existence of the Republic of Austria, less than 50% of the population really believed in the viability of an independent Austria, so political steps were needed to form people's sense of being citizens of a new state. In the 1950s and 1960s, the Austrian identity and self-consciousness were created, which differ from the German one, through the formation

and formation of national symbols. Due to this, the functions of socio-cultural and economic boundaries gradually come in line with geopolitical boundaries. Austria's state borders have become a reference point for people's identity in their daily lives. Since the early 1970s, the Austrian consciousness in the sense of a collective sense of unity has already been strong enough to build the foundation of a genuine Austrian identity [11, pp.529-532]. But, as emphasized above, this consciousness-altering process was not accidental, it was accompanied by important events and documents that have not lost their significance for the Austrian identity until now. This national identity was transmitted from one generation to the next through time-independent symbolic artifacts (for example, anthem, flag, state treaties, national holidays) and practical educational practices (for example, school curricula, musical traditions, collective memory). As a result, the newly created symbols became landmarks for future generations.

In this regard, attention should be paid to the quality of media projects aimed at strengthening the Kazakh identity and strengthening the relations of ethnic groups in the national space of the Republic of Kazakhstan. It is possible to assess their quality in the Republic of Kazakhstan as low. The Kazakh information space is inferior to the Russian one, and this is noticeable by the practical absence of information campaigns, especially at the regional level, in response to information occasions regarding the border territories of the Republic of Kazakhstan, which have been characteristic recently.

It seems that social changes in Kazakh society often occur against the background of an intellectual vacuum and are not widely discussed. Meanwhile, bringing relevant topics into the sphere of joint

public discussions helps opponents to hear each other. In this regard, it is important to deepen the historical narrative of the state in order to minimize various speculations and overcome threats to national security.

In the context of the theoretical conceptualization of the problem of national identity, it is necessary to consider especially the French model of economic and social integration of immigrants, who are expected to assimilate French values and culture. This model differs from the model of multiculturalism adopted in the Anglo-Saxon countries, based on the coexistence of different cultures. In general, it is noticeable that the economic and social consequences of globalization have led to the polyethnicity of European societies, as well as in European countries, the demands of migrants for recognition of their rights and their identities have increased.

However, in our opinion, national identity cannot be replaced by assimilation measures, and the "French Republican cauldron", which assumed cultural assimilation of all arriving in France, proved ineffective. To date, there is an increase in xenophobia in French society, and ethnic or ethno-confessional identity is perceived in society as a threat to national identity [12, p. 27]. This is manifested in the strengthening of the positions of the right in the country, which was expressed in the victory of the right-wing movements in elections at various levels, in particular, in the exit of Marine Le Pen, the leader of the National Front (since 2018, after rebranding, it became known as the National Association), twice, in 2017 and 2022, in the second round of presidential elections.

In turn, the strengthening of right-wing forces has led to a "Muslim renaissance" in Europe, as immigrants lock themselves in

their communities and seek their identity in a religious environment close to them. The prevailing attitude towards migration in society, the strengthening of Islamic fundamentalism, and the frequent terrorist acts pushed E. Macron to tighten migration policy, which was expressed, among other things, in the fight against illegal migration and restricting the admission of migrants. On February 18, 2020, the President of France stressed that in the French Republic it will never be recognized that "the laws of religion can surpass the laws of the Republic", and also that there is no place for "political Islam" in the Republic [13].

Comparing the policy of Kazakhstan with the processes of formation of national identity in France, it is possible to draw certain analogies. It is obvious that the success of the socio-economic development of the country will be associated with the development of an effective migration policy, as well as an appropriate model of ethnopolitics. For the successful construction of national identity, it seems necessary:

- to expand the cross-cultural space, encourage various target groups to engage in dialogue in the interests of strengthening civil identity, harmonizing interethnic relations, and promoting interreligious dialogue;
- to carry out constant monitoring and assessment of the demographic and migration situation;
- to develop the level of competence of the media;
- to promote the space of rapprochement of cultures, the development of research sites and the formation of a scientific cluster;

Requires its identification and comprehension of both positive, requiring animation, experience, and negative content. It is obvious that in modern conditions it is nec-

essary to look for a solution to the problem without hiding from it.

The construction of national-state identity is a complex and multifaceted process that requires an integrated approach and systematic work on the part of society and the state. A broad discussion of the problem of the national identity of the country and the search for ways and means of its formation are necessary.

All political forces, representatives of the most diverse strata and groups of the population should be involved in discussions about its essence and content. This work requires coordinated efforts of the authorities, civil society institutions, the media, educational organizations, and the scientific community.

Conclusion.

So, it is obvious that Kazakhstan has not yet overcome the identity crisis. To the question: "Who are we, Kazakhstanis?" there is still no clear answer. The peculiarity of the modern stage of the construction of national identity is that national identity finds itself in an ambivalent situation - pressure from globalizing factors that generate inherently unstable transnational identities, and local communities that generate alternative identities.

It seems that the attention of the Government of Kazakhstan will be directed to maintaining a stable socio-political space. Our country is facing the task of forming an appropriate political and legal foundation in order to strengthen national identity and consolidate society, to encourage citizens to identify themselves with the fundamental ideals of the country.

In addition, it should be noted that the economic crisis, aggravated by the coronavirus pandemic, and then by the

turbulent geopolitical situation in the world, aggravated socio-economic problems, caused a decline in living standards, which affected the political well-being of the Kazakh society. Meanwhile, economic well-being can also positively influence people's attitude towards the state, opening up opportunities for constructing national identity.

It can be added that the fears associated with the radicalization of Islamists against the background of the events of recent months in the country should also draw attention to the problem of national identity and orient political elites to create an

identity more universal and more integrated, accepted by a wider circle of people united around the basic national values and beliefs.

The elements of identification that form meaning for the nation should be the subject of the consensus reached. Only this can ensure real, not situational unity, and stability of society and the state.

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