

## Formation of the Kazakh Identity

<sup>1</sup>Ospanov Tauyekel, <sup>2</sup>Bissembayeva Zinakup, <sup>2</sup>Mukhamediyeva Gulzada,

<sup>3</sup>Anassova Kalamkas and <sup>4</sup>Karlygash Begdauletova

<sup>1</sup>Al-Farabi Kazakh National University,

<sup>2</sup>Asfendiyarov Kazakh National Medical University, Almaty, Republic of Kazakhstan

<sup>3</sup>Kazakh Academy of Labour and Social Sciences, Almaty, Republic of Kazakhstan

<sup>4</sup>South Kazakhstan State Pedagogical Institute, Shymkent, Republic of Kazakhstan

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**Abstract:** The study analyzes Kazakh national identity from a social and philosophical prospective. It reviews the main criteria and features of the formation of Kazakh identity as well as its current status. The development of individual identity and its components are reviewed and this identity is analyzed in the context of primordialism and constructionism. A range of theoretical and methodological approaches to identity research are reviewed and different approaches to national identity and its complexity are analyzed with a central focus on the analysis of causes and factors contributing to the formation of Kazakh national identity and ethnic self-consciousness.

**Key words:** Kazakhstan, national identity, self-consciousness, ethnic identity, nomadism

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### INTRODUCTION

The national policy of post-Soviet states moves between two poles, namely the ethnic nation and the civic nation. The problem of national identity is one of the most important problems of the Republic of Kazakhstan's cultural and social development in terms of its state sovereignty as the true independence of Kazakhstan is possible not only in terms of economic and political independence but primarily through the preservation of Kazakh culture's originality and uniqueness. National consciousness has had a decisive impact on the identity and worldview of both the individual and the society. For Kazakhstan with its multiethnic state, the problem, namely civic identity construction and at the same time Kazakh national identity preservation is a major factor and must be foregrounded. Kazakhstan today has all the attributes of sovereignty but not all the citizens associate themselves with the state. For what nation does the Republic of Kazakhstan act? In this study, we will examine the main factors and causes affecting identity construction in society.

### MAIN PART

**Theoretical and methodological basics of the study of national identity:** In considering national identity, we begin with a general theoretical approach to the phenomenon of identity in the history of philosophy as a

multidimensional process of identity formation. It is necessary to describing a complex of basic theories of identity.

The concept of ethnic identity in scientific studies us one of the most complicated and debatable themes due to the variety of theoretical and methodological approaches to the research of this question. Different disciplines study the ethnic identity: ethnology, sociology, psychology, political science, social philosophy.

Reviewing the national identity, we can divide scientists into two groups. First group of scientists is taking the position of primordialism (derived from lat. primordial-original) which presupposes the recognition of ethnic societies as objective phenomena of reality. This approach is the fundamental, the most widespread and scientifically proved approach. The second group, including constructionism and instrumentalism, denies or ignores the ethnicity as the subjective phenomenon, collection of ethnicity's real signs and states its factitiously created nature.

The primordialism considers ethnic communities as the objective phenomena of reality that have social-biological or evolutionary-historical nature. The followers of social-biological direction interpret the ethnicity as an objective reality, original nature of humanity and assume that the consciousness of belonging to the ethnicity is in the genetic code and is the product of earlier human evolution.

Followers of evolutionary-historical approach of the primordialism admit ethnic communities as special material and spiritual formation based on the community of territory, culture and psychology.

A group of modern researchers including domestic scientists, don't agree with the thesis of primordialists about nativistic, genetic predisposition of ethnic features and state that the ethnicity forms in the process of socialization. The weaknesses of "summative" approach in the studying the essential entity of ethnicity are noted. Ethnic is "something" that is only monitored by specified parameters on its own.

For the second group of approaches, combining constructionism and instrumentalism, it is right to deny or ignore the ethnic "substances". In the context of constructionism, ethnic is the factitiously politically formation, imaginary created reality that doesn't have cultural roots. National consciousness and perceptions and "doctrines" formed in its context are the intellectual construction created by a government, political elites, intellectual ideologies, etc. which stem from unstable values, symbols and myths. Instrumentalists assume that the ethnicity stays in dormancy and is revived and used in the purposes of social mobility, struggling with competitions, dominating and social controlling, return services and united behavior, political mobilization, etc. (Hasanov and Ospanov, 2015).

All specified approaches and their directions describe certain aspects of ethnic reality from various perspectives. In the terms of each of directions, there are range of productive ideas that adequately describe the ethnicity, ethnic processes and some weaknesses. Each one of reviewed approaches identifies a situationality has some limits of applicability and is quite effective cognitive tool for researching certain sides and stages of ethnic identity progress (Tishkov, 2001).

Different world view positions within the meaning of genesis and consciousness of German classic philosophy representatives (I. Kant, J.G. Fichte, F.W.J. Schelling, G.W.F. Hegel) contributed to the interpretation of human individualization and its identity. In 19th century, European philosophers put forth the theory of national identity, based on the synthesis of two concepts: rationalization postulate of J.J. Rousseau about the nation right to be the high sovereign in the political life and perceptions of German and English romanticists about the irrational nature of nation (unity by a language, a blood, folk traditions). European theoretics of nationalism G. Hegel, F. Guizot, H. Buckle, A.De Tocqueville-adhered the one concept. "The national idea of 19th century assumed that the democratic state is based on a political participation of demos (people) and the nationalism provides the possible constitution of demos which may or

not consist with people of the state". This idea, made as basis of European states from the Vienna system to German empire, assumed the inseparable unity of national and governmental institutions.

The problem of identification "me" had been being solved in the West psychology by S. Freud, A. Freud, E. Fromm, W. James, A. Adler, K. Horney, C. Jung, E. Erikson, D. Parfit, J. Habermas, M. Heidegger (Hasanov and Ospanov, 2015).

In the postnonclassic philosophy, the problem of identity is denied and the priority of identity over difference is disputed (T. Adorno, G. Deleuze, J. Derrida, E. Levinas, M. Foucault, M. Horkheimer, H. Marcuse); whereas, positivists (A. Comte, H. Spencer, J. Mill) saw the genesis identity only in its empiric manifestations as "identity", "difference", "multiplicity", etc. Perhaps, this doubt regarding to the personal identity is due to that this problem went beyond the borders of philosophy and science disciplines after the second half of 20th century.

Revealing the substance of ethnic identity must be started by considering the concept "identity". The identity research and appearing of this notion have its origins in the work of S. Freud "Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego" where first the notion of identity was used in the context of psychology. S. Freud consider the identification not just as unconscious emotional relation of baby with parents but also as an important collaborative mechanism between individual and social group. G. Mead reviewed social-psychological researches and works on person identity in the terms of role-based theory of personality. He considered the identification as an result of social interaction and he suggested the notion "the generalized other" which means set of impersonal instructions, norms and values of society. In the process of communicating with other people, the individual starts looking at him/herself from outside, i.e., as at the social object. According to G. Mead, the human obtains a consciousness and personal "me" only in group action as if he/she tries the role of "the generalized others" (Mead, 1934).

Romanucci-Ross and de Vos (1995) agree that as any other form of social identity, the ethnicity first of all has a subjective nature and is "the corporate feeling of social background and high mode of loyalty connected with relationship and belief in the common background".

After all, the national identity is connected with issues of meeting social requirements and with the problem of getting mature ability to bear with sufferings and death destined by fate. The national identity gives a feeling of own history.

To cross over this identity crisis, American psychologist Erik Homburger Erikson suggested an interdisciplinary approach. Relying on philosophical,

sociological, pedagogical and psychological researches, he created the theory of psychosocial development stages. The representative of ego-psychology defined the identity as an inner "continuity of individual's inner turmoil", "ongoing inner equality along with yourself" as the most significant character of integrity of personality, the integrity of person's feelings about own identity with certain social groups. The identity is not given to the human but created and its progression could be explained in terms of "achievements" and "becoming" which highlight its extensional character along with functional, not in terms of "formation". E. Erikson consider that the notion of identity means the deep internalized and personally acceptable own image in all relations of person to the world around, the feeling of adequateness and steady controlling the personal "me" regardless to changes in "me" and situation; the person ability to fully solve problems, appearing on every stage of development.

Identity in first place is sign of mature (adult) personality, origins and secrets, organizations of which are hidden but in preceding steps of ontogeny. Erikson describes the personality becoming as an progressing configuration which gradually forms in childhood through consequent "me-synthesis" and recrystallization. This is a such configuration that integrates constitutional disposition, features of libidinal requirements, preferable abilities, important identifications, efficient defence mechanisms, successful sublimations and performing roles. E. Erikson created a some sort of human development pattern during the whole life with the help of which we can trace the individual personality becoming. In his pattern, he emphasizes seven stages of identity development. In each stage, the person must make a decision "between two alternative phases of solving the age related and situational problems of development. The chosen character affects on the whole life in terms of its successfulness and unsuccessfulness".

If we look at origins of identity notion, we can see that along with personal identity (stability in a space) Erikson also implies the integrity (personal continuity in time), consequently, the identity is considered not only as personal but also as collective. The author worked with problems of individual life cycle's connection with the cycle of generation, generation dynamic issues of collective identity, causes of identity crisis, using such approaches as biographical, pathological, theoretical. Considering the identity in continuous functioning, Erikson emphasized three types of identity: civil, ethnic and social (Erikson, 1968).

Fromm (1994) also included the need of identity to the number of universal human wants. According to E. Fromm, the need of identity is in aspiration of people to

obtain a social status and in conformism as one of four psychological mechanisms of "running from freedom" described by him. According to E. Fromm one of the most required need of human is "the need of communicating with the world around, the need to avoid aloneness" which is achieved by identification with some ideas, values, social standards, i.e., through forming a social identity.

Modern researchers of identity problems mainly rely on concepts of foreign philosophers, mentioned above, where the identity components are: first, identification, i.e., identifying oneself to a certain group, secondly, thinking of own group "the image we" and interests, connecting emotionally coloured relation with such images of people and groups. "The image we" includes autostereotypes (vision of oneself) which form on the basis of relations with heterostereotypes (vision of others) also vision of a culture, a language, a living territory, a historical past, nationhood. The set of all these visions usually exists in the group level of identity. Correspondingly the identity is the correlation of personality with the group, representation about the group, social mechanisms of individual's self-determination belonging various groups. Each of them involves individual and collective identity of different scopes and contents.

It is notorious that many philosophers, cultural specialists and geopolitists especially emphasize the life environment of ethnicity as an basic self-generated notion. Exactly, it naturally predetermines and forms the household base of ethnicity which further determines the content and main values of their political-economical, sociocultural development.

The researcher Hobsbawm (1992) considers that the nation in first place identified the ethnic community but its modern meaning is political unity and independence. Stating that only "nation" and society members belonging to it represent the most important fundamental background of the social existence, it is absolutely impossible to specify some working criterion that will allow us to define what large human communities must have the label of "nation".

The role of state is certainly one of the most important conceptions defining its national identity, some kind of categorization which means to combine into groups. We always identify by certain ways all objects that we interact with. We identify ourselves through this process of identifying others as we find something common between us and members of whole intergroup in which we reckon ourselves and differences regarding to out group. Thus, we form identities which in this case realized through the mechanism of comparing "us" with "not-us" (Bloom, 1996).

The national identity is a dynamic historical quality of nation existence. It has own peculiarities as a specific historicity, the nation's keeping its historically constant but modificatory identity that endures as a chain of "revival" and "new lifes". National identity appears like certain imperative in choosing the historical way of nation's development. It acts like the result of previous times and at the same time like the bias in terms of future. Many believe that nation may the reality as the category of spiritual culture and collective cognition. The idea of nation as a rule is formed in the environment of one or other nation as the means of achievement of country's sovereignty and is realized with the acquisition and establishment of this country in the result the nation and country create own symbiosis.

Any great nation which created own national country forms own national idea which has the main assignment in the defining national state's identity in a row of other nations. National identity involves variety of components such as world view, national cognition and mentality, national character, historical memory, ethnic national patterns, national traditions, myths, symbols and stereotypes of behavior and etc.

In the context of theories of nationalism by Gellner (1997), the national identity can be interpreted as the form of fragmented culture's alignment in the traditional community to the unique nationality, "state" culture of contemporary industrial community where "high capital" and "low village" peripheral culture are combined.

The identity has concrete function such as integration and mobilization of masses, alignment of diversified territorial segments, legitimation of polities. In the process of formation the identity of the state efforts made by elites and bureaucracy plays a key role: elements of its design are national language policy, educational, symbolic, cultural policy. Nation and national (state) identity are represented as the constructed or imagined ones.

The person defines himself by values and symbols identifying himself by the nation. In cultural terms, Smith (1991) points out that national identity is reflected by the whole row of assumptions and myths, values and collective memory, also by the language, law, institutions and ceremonies. According to Smith, the feeling of national identity represents people the powerful tool to define and position own individual "I" in the world through the prism of collective identity and its specific culture. With the help of this specific culture shared by people we can know "who we are" in the contemporary world. Redefining this culture we redefine ourselves, our "true I". The search for national selfishness and treatment to it by people remain more mysterious element of national project.

In general, the concept nation and national identity is closely connected with each other, they suppose each other. The nation as the human community consists of people, sharing the common thing for them that is identity in terms of its national content. At the same time national identity is the self-cognition of the nation (Anderson, 1991).

The primordialist methodology which considers nation as the unchangeable in the time and space of human community is established in investigations on national problems in Kazakhstan. From primordialism's point of view the nation is laid in the genes of people, in other words, nation is like extended family.

#### **THE MAIN STAGES OF FORMATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF KAZAKH NATIONAL IDENTITY, "KAZAKH" IDENTITY AND "CITIZEN OF THE REPUBLIC OF KAZAKHSTAN" IDENTITY**

National identity of Kazakh people is actually the historical process and has many factors in terms of structure. National identity is inseparably connected with the formation of national identity, that is the process which becomes more challenging and contradictory in relation to globalization. Hence, it means people with great interest in the history of own nation, national origins, values, traditions and needs in the re-establishment of ancestry's culture. All of these important are factors of formation and development of national identity. The ethnic identity being futuristic more staple formation in comparison with other forms of identity is determined with the essence of person's need and the community in the harmony with the perception about own identity and place in the environment. National identity is determined with the person's attempt to see own individual reflection in the his world view.

The collapse of the Soviet Union led to an identity crisis in its former republics. Kazakhstan has greater ethnic diversity than in other Central Asian republics. After all, historically, Kazakhstan has been open to many national cultures such as the Orthodox and Muslims, Kazakhs and Russians, industry and agriculture groups and urban and rural populations. When Kazakhstan declared independence from the defunct USSR on December 16, 1991, ethnic Kazakhs constituted a minority in the new state, largely due to the Slavs' settlement in the country for two centuries and the fact that Kazakhstan, one of the homes of gulag was a dumping ground for individual dissidents and entire peoples during the Soviet period. Despite this ethnic heterogeneity, Kazakhstan has in stark contrast to its near neighbours, enjoyed relatively harmonious relationships among its many nationalities. This relative harmony is not inevitable; disturbances

during the Soviet period carried with them an element of ethnic conflict while the potential for secessionist tendencies amongst Kazakhstan's substantial ethnic Russian population, particularly in the North of the country has been an ongoing concern since independence (Hale, 2009).

Traditions, language, customs, values, beliefs and worldviews play definite roles in the formation of any human community, including a nation. This results in a community's the stability over social time and space. The main condition here is the cognition of community; these are symbols, values and traditions that concern all community members.

As to the process of formation the identity of Kazakh people, then it is directly connected with the establishing and developing the Kazakh nation. Another important stage of ethnic consolidation, formation of general ethnic identity of Kazakh tribes is the idea of nationhood and realization of this idea on the different stages of historical development. In the establishment of Kazakh identity one can highlight four main periods which are differentiated between themselves by directions and content of political, economical, cultural, ideological and other processes. The first stage is related to the formation of Kazakh Khanate and formation of ethnic national identity of new kind of nomadic people, it is necessary to mention about civilizational cultural basis of formation the Kazakh national identity on the base of which the Kazakh ethnoscapes made own culture with tradition, language, customs, values, beliefs and world views, all of these factors influenced the real historical consequences of Kazakh Khanate's way of life, long term development of Kazakh state in its political frames it was the unique Kazakh nation. Cultural community is formed on the base of homotype economy, the same way of life and specific way of work in the similar conditions of environment. Each Kazakh nomadic person realize difference in own personality and characteristics in comparison with other neighbor nations and tribes. It leads to the formation of national identity which is followed after. Awareness of own ethnic unity is reflected in the majority of epic compositions by the nation.

In the second stage, it goes about establishing and further storing self conscious in the period of imperial protectorate, the latter in its turn tried to deform religious identity of Kazakh people and limited the definite freedom of nomadic people. The migration to the territory of Kazakhstan begins since this period of time and multicultural composition of population and wide range of processes are gradually formed. It is worth noting that due to the first Kazakh nationalists during imperial period who treat the whole national symbols including the

symbol, the ethnonym "Kazakh" encourage the formation of Kazakh people's national identity. Hence, representation about own personality as the unique coherent community in the national community is formed. According to the statement of French politician Olivier Roy nationalism of Kazakh people emerged during the first stages of history in comparison with other nations of the Central Asia (Roy, 2000). This nationalism was emerged and supported as the reaction to national intelligence, national elite on the colonial policy of imperial regime. National identity which was formed on the base of Kazakh nationalism became the foundation which gave Kazakh people the opportunity to differentiate themselves from other Turkic peoples of the Central Asia and perceived themselves as the Kazakh people, not the Turkic ones.

The Soviet period can be characterized as the knitting of artificial identity based on the citizens' principles (the Soviet identity). Kazakh people were a part of the Soviet nations which had the ideology "as the new historical community of people" at that time. The negative side can be the loss of own national culture's part, correspondingly own national identity. During these years the intensive but difficult processes were going but Kazakh people did not give up to feel the unity of own destiny, tradition, culture, language.

With the emergence of an independent Kazakhstan, its citizens' self-identification became challenging. The most acute question is the extent to which different ethnic identities can coexist in Kazakh society; the interaction and coexistence of the self as a Kazakh, thus, identifying oneself with the state and belonging to an ethnic identity in a multi-ethnic Kazakhstan forced many to consider the sources of tension. It should be noted that the dynamic of the ethno-cultural processes in Kazakhstan has been the subject of numerous studies.

The young state had to choose to form a national and civic identity as its citizens would be called "Kazakh" and "citizens of Kazakhstan." The status of Kazakh as a nation-state was legislatively enshrined in the Declaration of State Sovereignty of the Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic (SSR) from October 25, 1990 and the constitutional law "on the State Independence of the Republic of Kazakhstan," dated December 16, 1991, stressed "the right to self-determination of the Kazakh nation." Nation-building in this period was characterized by the dominance of an ethno-national understanding of the nation, since the constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan, dated January 28, 1993, identified the Republic of Kazakhstan state as the form of the Kazakh nation state. In other words, the first stage of Kazakhstan's nation building found expression in an

ethno-nation state. However, the ethnocentric approach led to a process of societal disintegration, increasing the rift between the two main ethnos Kazakh and Russian. The last Soviet census of 1989 estimated the percentage of Slavs in the population to be 44%, a figure that included 6,227,549 Russians (37.8% of the total population) (Beachain and Kevlihan, 2011).

Interethnic conflicts were certainly stimuli but they did not cause an irreversible split in society. If we examine the first years of independence, the sense of civic pride in the new state or devotion to it was very weak. At the end of 1995, only 22.9% of respondents to a survey conducted by a newspaper said that they were proud to be citizens of Kazakhstan whereas 40% said they were satisfied with their citizenship and 30.6% said that they do not care (Olcott, 2002).

Therefore, in 1995, a new Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan was adopted where the ethnocentric approach was replaced by a politico-territorial principle of nation building. According to this, a subject of the Republic of Kazakhstan serves the nation as a political and territorial community. Since then, the civil aspects of the nation have been greatly emphasized and ethnic boundaries have moved into the background.

In Kazakhstan and this must be highlighted, nation building is conducted in the civil concept of national and civil identification. The understanding of the nation as a state's community of citizens is generally accepted in international practice and international law, irrespective of their ethnic, cultural, religious or other affiliation (Yertysbaev, 2001).

In all countries with a developed democracy, the vast majority of the population puts citizenship above ethnic origin. In fact, Nursultan Nazarbayev, the President of Kazakhstan, proceeded this way and insisted that in the new Kazakh passport the notorious 5th section denoting "nationality" would be deleted.

The nation, although determined by the Constitution of Kazakhstan is also based on international law. This is the primary external cause of the Kazakh nation people's unity on the basis of nationality. Moreover, the President continues to promote civic as well as ethnic notions of the nation; as recently as 2009, Nazarbayev reaffirmed the importance of the civic state building project thus, strengthening the legislative position of the assembly of peoples, a body responsible for the preservation and promotion of Kazakhstan's diverse cultural heritage. Some officials have attempted to square this circle, arguing that the Kazakh culture and language may ultimately become the consolidating factor among the entire Kazakh nation while other languages and cultures present within Kazakhstan are preserved and respected (Jones, 2010).

Therefore, the main aim of Kazakhstan's national policy was the formation of a single nation as a civic community of people belonging to different ethnicities. In today's reality, the essence is that public identification is based on ethnicity and its preservation. The scientific community has been involved in discussions about whether it is possible for one to coexist with the other. The following are some main causes of conflict preventing nation building in the country:

- Within the individual and collective consciousness of the representatives of the Kazakh people, ethnic identity is in excess of civic identity, thus the ethno-cultural concept of the nation dominates the civil concept
- Inconsistencies exist in the sphere of language as Kazakh is the state language but not the language of interethnic communication, functioning only in an ethnic environment
- The disunity of ethnic groups in Kazakhstan, the existence of rigid ethnic identity boundaries on the principle "ours-others" generates ethnic distance

As shown by Olcott (2002), every post-Soviet state found it difficult to define its citizens but in Kazakhstan, these efforts faced the greatest contradictions. These contradictions are due to the fact that when Kazakhstan gained its statehood, its two main constituent ethnic populations, namely Russian and Kazakh, perceived the world differently and thus set the government the task of reconciling these complex differences.

The government wants to achieve two goals simultaneously: to turn Kazakhstan into a special place for the Kazakhs and foster a sense of civic pride among all other nationalities.

More recent data from the survey conducted by the Kazakhstan Institute for Strategic Studies shows that the majority of respondents define themselves with isolated ethnic identities, 79.1% of respondents believe that Kazakhstan should develop a civil nation-building model that unites all citizens regardless of their identity are shown in Table 1 (Chernykh, 2014).

Acting in accordance with the plan in effect until 2025 and the timing of its implementation, the President of

**Table 1: Civil nation-building model**

Conflict preventing nation	Value (%)
Kazakhstan should become a united nation of citizens and of all the people of Kazakhstan regardless ethnicity should be state-forming peoples	79.1
Kazakhstan is a multinational country but only Kazakhs should be considered state-forming citizens	13.3
Kazakhstan has become a state of the Kazakhs and Kazakhs the only have the right to determine moment and future of Kazakhstan	3.2
Difficult to answer	4.5

the Republic of Kazakhstan signed decree number 147 on December 28, 2015 “on the approval of the concept of strengthening and developing the Kazakh national identity and unity.” Identity formation will occur on the following vectors:

- The identity of the principle of citizenship
- Promoting national patriotic ideas “Mangilik El” as a system of values reflecting the experience of national independence
- Trinity of languages
- Generation of “Mangilik El”

According to Baitukenov (2016), there are no key principles in the concept of strengthening and developing the Kazakh nation identity; even in the final part, the authors were limited to general statements. After all, citizenship implies a certain ideological commonality and commitment to certain principles of the society’s functioning. Nevertheless, in today’s world there are no uniform standards or patterns for the strengthening and development of identity and unity.

### CONCLUSION

Unsuccessful policy implementation and the further preservation of Kazakh identity may lead to domestic crisis and the end of its decay. Moreover, national identity is responsible for the internal integrity of the entire society and defines the current state of the political and economic system and its stability. Much of the credit for the construction of the dual public-civic identity and ethnic identity in the country belongs directly to the government and head of state. In fact, this duality of identity is very similar to the model of the duality of the Soviet Union, only with other attributes. This article confirms that attempts to force the model of civic identity formation without considering the historical and sociocultural community can only complicate interethnic problems in Kazakhstan.

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