

**CIVIL NATION  
IN THE CONTEXT OF  
NATIONAL CONSCIOUSNESS:  
THE REPUBLIC OF UZBEKISTAN**

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National communities create corresponding national consciousnesses, which means that the number of nations living on Earth corresponds to the number of national consciousnesses. Every nation has national consciousness, which means that it thinks. As a thinking entity it determines the way its national features are devel-

oped in all, including spiritual, spheres. It produces thoughts, regulates their production, and distributes them. The fact that national consciousness has its own components is its specific feature; they reflect the national conditions of life, national interests, and national relations and, therefore, determine the content of national consciousness.

It serves as the core of consciousness that keeps alive the faith that one's nation is capable of independent national creativity and of historically conditioned interpretation of its national and state sovereignty. So far most of the world's nationalities have no national statehood of their own, which means that for a long time to come ethnic awareness will determine political dynamics.

Elements of alien consciousnesses invariably affect (negatively or positively) all functioning national consciousnesses. The most active among them are of universal significance. They can be described as elements related to the need to develop civil societies, the structure of which exceeds the limits of ethnic identity and is kept together by shared civil interests.

*The Idea of National Independence: The Key Concepts and Principles of Uzbekistan* (Miliy istiklol goiasi) contains no direct reference to the civil nation, however its content presupposes its development along this road<sup>1</sup> by pointing to the need to correlate the elements of consciousness shared by all mankind and national consciousness.<sup>2</sup>

To protect national consciousness against alien influence the nation develops a national idea at the ideological and theoretical levels of its consciousness to become "ideologically immune."<sup>3</sup> The post-Soviet nations know only too well how their consciousness was suppressed by information borrowed from class consciousness. It was a time when the national was described as a stumbling block on the road to the international.

Freed from the pressure of class consciousness, national consciousness will, for a long time, remain wary of all ideas found beyond the bounds of ethnic identity. The idea of a civil nation calls for subtle approaches and delicate treatment: national consciousness does not distinguish between it and the "internationalization" process: the nation loses its specific features and its specific image. The way national consciousness accepts the idea of a civil nation depends on the nation's

<sup>1</sup> See: *The Idea of National Independence: The Key Concepts and Principles of Uzbekistan*, Uzbekiston, Tashkent, 2001, pp. 44-45 (in Uzbek).

<sup>2</sup> See: *Ibid.*, p. 48.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.

need to think about national reality differently than in the past while keeping in mind the nation's interests.

So far elements that belong to all mankind occupy a small place in national consciousness even though they figure prominently in the life of nations and mankind: all sorts of group consciousness rather than social consciousness with elements shared by all mankind play the leading role in society. This is confirmed by the phenomenon of ethnic resurrection that has already changed the political map of the world.

In polyethnic Uzbekistan we should answer the question: How can civil society be built in the context of national consciousness?

National consciousness should not be regarded as something that divides or as a positive or negative phenomenon on the road to civil society. The components of national consciousness and its subjects describe its role in polyethnic Uzbekistan. This multiplies the number of surmised contents of consciousness by the number of identified producer-subjects and carrier-subjects of national consciousness. The number of members of any given nationality in a state corresponds to the number of contents of national consciousness. By taking into account ethnic groups we take into account the number of models of national consciousness.

National self-identity of the individual is determined by the importance of his nation; his civil identity is determined by his attitude toward the state (in our case Uzbekistan). Our opinion poll produced the following results.<sup>4</sup> When answering the question "What are you in the first place?" over half of the polled Uzbeks answered that they were primarily citizens of the Republic of Uzbekistan; 40 percent of the polled Uzbeks said that they were members of their nation; a mere 4 percent described themselves as belonging to their "smaller homeland;" and few of the respondents regarded themselves as Muslims.

<sup>4</sup> A public opinion poll (460 people) was carried out to obtain empirical data on the issue and to identify the subjective opinions of the ethnic groups. Three hundred and forty Uzbeks were presented with questions in Uzbek; 120 members of other nations (Russians, Tatars, Koreans, Jews, Kazakhs, Tajiks, Armenians, and others) in Russian.

The answers suggest that national and civil consciousnesses exist in society in individual and public forms. Those respondents who treated their citizenship as a priority proceeded from public consciousness. Those who treated their nationality as a priority likewise proceeded from public consciousness but their answers related them to group national consciousness. A small share of answers related those who gave them to individual consciousness in the shape of logical inferences, world outlooks, and psychological activity. In her interview to Interfax Academician R. Ubaidullaeva, Director of the Izhtimoiy fikr (Social Opinion) Center, pointed out that according to the 2006 poll 65 percent of the polled regarded themselves primarily as citizens of Uzbekistan. They, however, were not in the majority, added the academician.

About 40 percent of the Russian speakers (Russians, Tatars, Koreans) described themselves as citizens of the Republic of Uzbekistan in the first place. One hundred percent of Kazakhs, Ukrainians, Byelorussians, Armenians, and Jews described themselves as members of their corresponding nationalities. Some of the Russian speakers did not make an issue of their belonging

to their nationalities: they are more concerned with the values of a civil nation that go beyond the bounds of ethnic identity and that presuppose the development of a community of citizens of a polyethnic state. They are looking forward to seeing Uzbekistan as a community of citizens and associate their future with it. Another part of the polled concentrated on the idea of the ethno-nation; they believed that their nation could develop independently and demonstrated national-historical creativity and its interpretation of national and state sovereignty.

Philosophy today has offered a novel approach to the assessment of the relationship between public and group consciousnesses: society develops by relying on the elements and components of public consciousness that are of perpetual value to all mankind. I have in mind, in particular, the values of a civil nation. As an inalienable part of public consciousness national consciousness cannot cope with the problem of identification of a nation other than as an ethnocultural category.

The specifics of national consciousness clearly demonstrate why a ramified conception of national independence inevitably relies on the theory of the development of ethno-nations.

## Specifics of National Consciousness

The national consciousness of any nation in its pure form is an abstraction—this is its most obvious specific feature. In real life nationalities have to deal with the specific and functioning national consciousness of specific nations.

It takes shape in the process of national practices and is finalized by the entire nation in the form of spiritual production. The real interrelations that connect all nationalities form the watershed between the functioning and abstract consciousness, the content of which depends on the elements of consciousness born by the nation at any given moment and on the elements inherited from preceding generations. The latter can remain immune to changes and survive for a long time as remnants of consciousness.

The content of national consciousness depends on the quality and level of national practices as well as on the nature of the relations between its elements and the elements borrowed from other consciousnesses. It is not always easy to identify the correlation between the borrowed elements in national consciousness.

By blending with the national consciousness elements of certain other consciousnesses (philosophical, etc.) a scholarly dimension is added to the idea of national life. At the same time national and

class consciousnesses have widely differing value orientations; under Soviet power elements of the latter predominated in society and group consciousnesses.

As a social-ethical product national consciousness preserves itself as long as the corresponding nation exists. Today, it completely corresponds to all the specific features of the community moving toward stronger national sovereignty: at this stage the elements of consciousness born by the nation predominate over the elements born by other communities.

National content remains specific because of ethnic self-awareness, which differs from the idea of “we” of all other nations. National specifics are grasped through subjective perceptions that stress some features of the national and downplay others. This is typical of all nations in the process of ethnic consolidation: “If a nation apes the Western way of life it will not merely bury its national traditions but will also lose all its influence in the world.”<sup>5</sup>

National consciousness is discrete by nature: during certain periods it remains dormant only to resurge and become resurrected during other periods. It should be said that not all nationalities demonstrate cohesion and unity even at the height of national resurgence.

Most of the nation supports the current social, political, and economic course of the Republic of Uzbekistan. Eighty-six percent believe that “during the years of independence the country became much richer economically, financially, politically, and spiritually.”<sup>6</sup> There were those among the polled who looked at the nation’s chosen road at the level of everyday life. Their “common sense” suggested that they should grasp the meaning of the chosen road but the content of their consciousness was unstable: they shared and at the same time rejected the scientific substantiations of the new development course.

The content of the consciousness of a small part of an ethnic group might differ from that of the nation.

The above deliberations of national consciousness can be correctly interpreted only if we take into account the fact that two opposite forces—introversion and extraversion—are invariably present in national life. The former means that the nation tends to protect the values that constitute its ethnic specifics and manifest themselves in the nation’s highly unique nature. National consciousness has a key role to play in this process. The latter turns the nation toward the world around it.

*The Idea of National Independence: The Key Concepts and Principles of Uzbekistan* has charted a road toward stronger creative efforts in developing Uzbekistan’s sovereignty, “preservation and strengthening of the country’s independence, territorial integrity, and inviolability of its borders.”<sup>7</sup> The document is free from superficial statements intended to impress and stir up national emotions or passions. The ideas develop according to the logic of gradual transition and changes. This has become known as the “Uzbek model” of state- and society-building.<sup>8</sup>

The mechanism of national consciousness operates in the following way: the ideas in the spheres of education, science, culture, sport, religion, etc. are aimed at changing the nation’s conditions of life. The authors of the Idea reject “cultural activities limited to the commercial sphere”<sup>9</sup>; they say that “the highly educated and selfless younger generation will create a great future for itself”<sup>10</sup> and “makhalla is, in fact, the primary school of democracy.”<sup>11</sup> The changed conditions will inevitably affect the content of national consciousness which, in turn, will call to life new interests.

<sup>5</sup> E. Norbutaeva, “Conscience or Fashion,” *Family and Society*, 26 January, 2006 (in Uzbek).

<sup>6</sup> R. Ubaidullaeva, “Uzbekistan: 15 let nezavisimosti (po rezul'tatam sotsiologicheskogo oprosa),” *Obshchestvennoe mnenie. Prava cheloveka*, No. 3 (35), 2006.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 44.

<sup>8</sup> See: *Ibid.*, pp. 35-37.

<sup>9</sup> *The Idea of National Independence: The Key Concepts and Principles of Uzbekistan*, p. 64.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 66.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 68.

In fact, the ideological and psychological spheres of national consciousness are changing to a great extent; not all changes, however, can be described as positive: the state is developing its independence under globalization pressure which inevitably challenges, in the most serious way, the still undeveloped national consciousness.

On the other hand, national consciousness is affected by certain irrational elements—prejudices that can be described as false knowledge. This is a dangerous phenomenon because the individual who grew up in a society in which national consciousness was dominated by irrational elements and the false knowledge rooted in them would take this knowledge as the truth. A nation raised on national prejudices remains ignorant of the fact that its knowledge is false. The individual educated under Soviet power that preached that the national was but an obstacle on the road towards the “Soviet people” will hasten to impose on others the idea of abandoning the ethno-nation in favor of a civil national identity.

## The Ethno-Nation and Civil Nation

Can Uzbekistan develop an ethno-nation and civil national consciousness simultaneously? Yes, this can be done.

All citizens irrespective of their ethnic affiliations have tied their fate to the Uzbek nation, which means that we are working on the idea that Uzbekistan is our common Motherland. In the course of its realization the conceptual equipment of “nation” is being revised in the context of the civil nation rather than ethnic positions.

The Idea of National Independence suggests that agreement and friendship between the titular and other ethnic groups is one of the factors of social development. According to the last population census (carried out in 1989 and therefore obsolete), there are over 130 ethnic groups living in Uzbekistan. Does this suggest the presence of 130 national consciousnesses? One cannot accept the idea that in any CIS country there are as many as 100 or even 180 nationalities. We should rather be guided by the following: “The fact that there are various ethnic groups living here does not mean that they can be regarded as nationalities rather than scattered national groups.”<sup>12</sup> From this it follows that the presence of 130 ethnic groups does not lead to 130 national consciousnesses.

National consciousnesses are manifested where there are nations and a set of social, ethical, and spiritual relations inside the national entity, which determines, defines, and gives birth to national ideas, views, theories, and prejudices. Ethnic groups working together in the system of social, ethical and spiritual relations are the producer- and carrier-subjects of national consciousness. In Uzbekistan only two nations (the Uzbeks and Karakalpaks) demonstrate that their national consciousness is determined by the practice of national life. It was their national consciousnesses that articulate in the fullest form the idea of Uzbekistan’s independence.

In the context of its national consciousness the nation wants to preserve sovereignty and determine its future; it is next to impossible to do this without a national idea and national ideology. The creator-subjects develop the very much needed idea of national independence on the basis of the components most developed in national consciousness for the simple reason that a national idea is part and parcel of national consciousness.

The national idea can be traced back in its clearest form to Europe of the 16th-19th centuries when European nations were consolidating into nation-states. The idea that each nation should have

<sup>12</sup> E.V. Tadevosian, “Etonatsiia: mif i sotsialnaia realnost,” *Sotsiologicheskie issledovaniia*, No. 6, 1998.

its sovereign national state and that the rights of the nation dominate over the rights of the individual are two linchpins of any national idea. This played an important role in Europe when nations were fighting for national independence. Today the polyethnic European states are living through another historical process: state formation on the basis of civil national identity.

The newly independent states are not immune to the idea of civil national identity. The Idea of National Independence does not operate with the term “civil nation” although it recognizes its existence. The titular nation should not be pushed toward the civil nation stage: time is needed to grasp the meaning of this term in the same way as happened with the already accepted ideas of national sovereignty and the national idea.

The civil nation concept is a deeply rooted and multidimensional idea that has not yet received its clear scholarly definition. So far it is not quite clear how a nation that relies on a functioning national consciousness can address the task. It would be highly naïve to imagine that national ideology, an extremely complicated phenomenon, contains elements related to the “civil nation” concept (something that exceeds the limits of national practice). The content of national consciousness is unrelated to the use of meaningful elements related to a correct understanding of the principles of the civil nation: national consciousness treats them as alien and rooted in a different consciousness.

For these reasons when dealing with the recognition of the continuity of the spiritual heritage of nationalities, the Idea of National Independence concentrates on the identifying features of the ethnonation. It is not hard to understand why the history of the people that created this conception underlies the national independence ideology: the authors rely on “one’s own” components of national consciousness shaped by Oriental philosophy based on the ideas of *paternalism*, *collectivism*, and *the priority of public opinion*. It was these ideas that determined the content of the Idea of National Independence and they cannot be ignored or rejected in the process of formulating the national idea.

The essential elements of national psychology and national ideology in national consciousness affect the idea that the right of the nation is higher than the right of the individual. A nation that finally achieved sovereignty should overcome this for the sake of achieving equality of all nations within the state borders. This explains why those who authored the Idea borrowed certain elements of consciousness typical of all mankind in addition to national specifics.<sup>13</sup>

For example, Kazakhs, Tajiks, Kirghiz, and Turkmen, all members of the region’s autochthonous population who live in Uzbekistan, are the victims of random territorial delineation of the 1920s-1930s. They remain the carrier-subjects of the national consciousness of their own nations because it contains self-identification features easily grasped and easily comprehended by these ethnic groups. Along with the Uzbeks they belong to one ethnic, cultural, and religious group while many years of living side by side with the Uzbek nation makes it easier for them to actively accept its values, traditions, way of life, and language and thus to think in the elements of the Uzbek national consciousness.

The Russians, Byelorussians, Koreans, Jews, and Ukrainians of Uzbekistan have found themselves in an alien cultural, ethnic, and religious milieu. In fact they are “scattered” across the republic’s territory,<sup>14</sup> which inevitably affects their cultural contacts and ties among themselves and their nations. Those ethnic groups that live far from their nations have the *illusion of mastering* their national consciousness; if they have any ideas about it they can be described as an *abstract* national consciousness. It is wrongly believed at the everyday level that individuals living in different national milieus can play the role of carriers of the national consciousness of their nations on the strength of counting themselves as part of them.

<sup>13</sup> See: *The Idea of National Independence: The Key Concepts and Principles of Uzbekistan*, pp. 47-49.

<sup>14</sup> See: O. Ata-Mirzaev, V. Gentshke, R. Murtazaeva, *Uzbekistan mnogonatsionalnyi: istoriko-demograficheskiy aspekt*, Tashkent, 1998, p. 67.

Detached from the everyday life of their nations they cannot preserve the cause-and-effect ties between the national consciousness and life of their nations. They have a good command of the elements of ethnic consciousness (the language, traditions, ethnic cuisine, psychic makeup, etc.). They master the results achieved by the Uzbeks in generalizing their practice of ethnic relations, which means that they have mastered certain components of the Uzbek national consciousness. The polled Russian-speakers demonstrated complete satisfaction with the development level of the Uzbek national consciousness: the titular nation is capable of identifying strivings common to all mankind and appreciating the idea of civil equality.<sup>15</sup>

The objective process of living side by side creates conditions for social and political changes to transform the country into a community of citizens of any given state. The way individuals treat their civil and ethnic identity reveals the extent to which this issue has taken root in the people's minds.

In Uzbekistan its citizens generally regard themselves as equal members of society; each of them is free to determine his own ethnic identity. To achieve the aims formulated by the Idea we should simultaneously develop an ethno-nation and civil national identity.

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<sup>15</sup> See: R.N. Shigabdinov, "History and Sides of Our Friendship," in: *Uzbekistan—the Quiet Land*, ed. by A. Ochilidiev, Uzbekiston, Tashkent, 2007, pp. 137-138 (in Uzbek).