

## ETHNIC RELATIONS AND MIGRATION

### THE SPACE OF ETHNONATIONAL IDENTITIES OF KAZAKHSTAN SOCIETY: PRINCIPLES AND MODELS OF STRATIFICATION

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## ABSTRACT

**T**he authors discuss the general patterns and specific features of the process of shaping the ethnocultural and national identities in the multiethnic society of contemporary Kazakhstan. For the first time in Kazakhstan's political sociology the problem is studied using the methodology applied to construct reflexive analytical social space models. The authors offer a model of inter-

ethnic cooperation space stratification in the republic based on seven fundamentally important features; analyze the singularities of the Kazakhs' subethnic identity space in the process of the emergence of a common Kazakhstan identity and reveal the role of the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan as a unique form of institutionalized organization of space of civil and ethnocultural identity.

**KEYWORDS:** *identity, nation, ethnicity, social space, stratification.*

## *Introduction*

The development of global information and communication systems and removal of ideological and political barriers between nations and cultures have greatly expanded contacts between different cultures, values, social attitudes and lifestyles. The individuals drawn into global information and communication processes that weaken or even destroy their identification with big and small communities (nation/state, social/professional, ethnic, religious and territorial) acquire new identities. At the same time, the information revolution generates new types of challenges to national security and state sovereignty.

Today, competitive identity has become a commodity of sorts on the global market of cultural and philosophical paradigms and ideologies. Today, more likely than not, political ideologies are based on definitions of "identities" and claims to present them. The scope of identification models ranges from extremist ethnic nationalism that borders on the most odious racist and xenophobic teachings to cosmopolitanism as an ideology of nation-building. Singapore is the best example of the latter: since the 1990s, its cultural policies have been using the "cosmopolitan Singapore" term as the central paradigm: "Singapore's nation-building appeals to cosmopolitanism as the eventual national spirit."<sup>1</sup> While Singapore has adjusted its ethnocultural identity to the cosmopolitan nature of global systems, the United States regards cosmopolitanism as a globalized system of values of American (Western) democracy.

Regardless of one's opinion about the concepts of the post-national turn of the social world and "cosmopolitanization of nations" (Ulrich Beck and Daniel Levy)<sup>2</sup>—the number of their critics is more or less equal to the number of their apologists, both groups being highly respected by the academic community—it is crucial to admit that cultural distinctions and the group identification are still very important for people, society and the state. Globalization has confirmed what Huntington had written at one time: "...culture and cultural identities, which at the broadest level are civilization identities, are shaping the patterns of cohesion, disintegration, and conflict in the post-Cold War world."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Chang Pi-Chun, "Going Global and Staying Local: Nation-Building Discourses in Singapore's Cultural Policies," *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power*, Vol. 19, No. 6, 2012, p. 693.

<sup>2</sup> U. Beck, D. Levy, "Cosmopolitanized Nations: Re-imagining Collectivity in World Risk Society," *Theory, Culture and Society*, No. 30 (2), 2013, pp. 3-31.

<sup>3</sup> S.P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, Simon & Schuster, New York, 1996, p. 20.

Given pluralism of ideas about the world that coexists with the ideological vacuum, hypertrophied and, more than that, politically engaged ethnocultural or confessional identities, may trigger anti-social moods and socially destructive practices. In fact, changes in the sphere of ethnicity and religion, no matter how insignificant in the context of historical fluctuations, have shattered states and triggered unpredictable social changes. This has prompted this article and showed the direction of our studies.

The authors have chosen the methodology of a social space analysis and the building up of its reflexive models elaborated by Pierre Bourdieu and his school of genetic structuralism.<sup>4</sup> It should be said that despite a great number of publications dealing with the problems of ethnonational identity this approach to the studies of its specifics in Kazakhstan has not yet been tested.

We have created a multidimensional model of stratification of the ethnonational identity space in the Kazakhstan society that makes it possible to reassess and explicate in a new way and in many respects the phenomenon that Marlene Laruelle defined as Kazakhstan's "hybrid state identity."<sup>5</sup> This is our original contribution to the discussion of the problem.

## 1. Stratification of the Social Space of Identity

According to the commonly accepted definition, social stratification is understood as hierarchically arranged social inequality and a process by which individuals and groups acquire their places in this hierarchy according to their socially important descriptions.

Not infrequently, researchers use the term "social space" to describe this stratification. The concept goes back to Pitirim Sorokin who coined it to define the social position of an individual, a group of people or a social event.<sup>6</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, who specified the concept of social space and coined the concept of social field, considerably enriched contemporary sociology by moving outside the pinching limits of both functional and phenomenological approaches by rationalizing the activeness of the subject of stratification.

He used what he called "capitals" as coordinates of the social space: bureaucratic capital, capital of physical coercion, economic, cultural, social, information and symbolic (prestige, reputation, name, etc.), and juridical. Pitirim Sorokin used social, economic, political and professional stratification as the coordinate axis of social space.

The above means that social space can be stratified through system differentiation and social hierarchy of status groups. Additionally, it can be noted that in this context the subject of discussion should be several hierarchical systems of socially important differences and, therefore, social statuses, rather than a homogenous foundation of social space stratification.

A relational concept considers space to be a type of relationship or a form of coordination between interacting objects. Accordingly, in Bourdieu's genetic structuralism social space is understood as a structure of social positions, while its topological properties are determined by

(a) objective characteristics of the studied phenomena and processes;

~~(b) symbolic codes or classification schemes;~~

(c) tools and goals of sociological research.

<sup>4</sup> See: P. Bourdieu, *Sotsialnoe prostranstvo: polia i praktiki*, Institute of Experimental Psychology, Moscow; Aleteyia, St. Petersburg, 2007.

<sup>5</sup> M. Laruelle, Forthcoming. "The Three Repertoires of State Identity in Kazakhstan. Kazakhness, Kazakhstanness and Transnationalism," in: *Kazakhstan beyond Economic Success: Exploring Social and Cultural Changes in Eurasia*, ed. by M. Laruelle, S. Peyrouse, M.E. Sharpe, New York, 2015.

<sup>6</sup> See: P.A. Sorokin, "Sotsialnaia i kulturnaia mobilnost'," in: P.A. Sorokin, *Chelovek. Tsivilizatsia. Obshchestvo*, Politizdat, Moscow, 1992, pp. 297-424.

Relevance of the social space construction parameters to the basic objective, subjective and intersubjective structures (habitus) of social reality is the main methodological problem.

To correctly formulate the question of ethnonational identification space stratification, we should define the concept of stratum. In Ancient Roman social and political literature, the term stratum ("coverlet" or "blanket" in Latin) was used to describe the part of social space where man was comfortably "at home." This means that in the contemporary social discourse the term "strata" should be understood as forms of *self-organization* of people into referent groups or *self-identified* entities which emerged on the basis of the specifics of the world outlook and coherent collective behavior in full conformity with the initial and profound meaning of the term. This interpretation clarifies the difference between stratum and class, estate, caste and other objectively differentiated and institutionalized social entities.

Pierre Bourdieu's model of social space includes a set of social fields, that is, relatively autonomous systems of social relationship subfields between the positions of individual or group agents. The topology of social space is determined by the power fields operating in it, rather than by direct interactions of collective and individual subjects. The space of social identifications includes several fields of force: ethnocultural, sociolinguistic, civil, confessional, social-status, political-ideological and philosophical.

The space of identities in each of the sociocultural systems is multidimensional; each individual has a multiple identity and exists in parallel spaces or worlds of identities. It is fundamentally important to proceed from the idea about identity as the key element of subjective reality formed, at the same time, by social processes. "Conversely, the identities produced by the interplay of organism, individual consciousness and social structure react upon the given social structure, maintaining it, modifying it, or even reshaping it."<sup>7</sup>

The space of social identities is one of the promising spaces in which the methodology of studies of social fields and practices developed by Bourdieu's school can be used. This methodology makes it possible to analyze both the genesis and the inner structure of any of the fields of identity, as well as the configuration of the interaction of these fields as sub-spaces of a single social space. The phenomenon of identity is registered and studied at three interconnected levels:

- (a) the level of objectivized conditions of social identification;
- (b) the level of symbolic matrices and inter-subjective communicating practices;
- (c) the level of subjective ideas of individuals and social groups about their identities.

Bourdieu's methodology of genetic structuralism intended to apply a comprehensive approach to the studies of social reality makes it possible to map the social identification landscape, to build up topological models of its space and conceptual schemes of identification processes.

## 2. Dispositions of the Field of Ethnic Identity in Kazakhstan Society

The space of ethnosocial stratification in Kazakhstan is a complex structured whole; it is unbalanced in many respects, disharmonic and contradictory. This makes the standard division of population of any country into an ethnic majority and ethnic minorities, or into autochthonous and non-au-

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<sup>7</sup> P.L. Berger, Th. Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*, Doubleday, Garden City, New York, 1966, p. 194.

tochthonous population accepted in international practice, in official documents of the U.N., OSCE, UNESCO and academic writings insufficient and inadequate.

The ethnic communities in Kazakhstan differ from one another by the nature of their involvement in nation-building and the specifics that determine their sociocultural development. These differences are created by the very complicated structure of ethnosocial stratification that consists of several basic levels where the processes of ethnic identification and differentiation take place objectively and subjectively.

We are convinced that the field of ethnocultural identification of Kazakhstan's population is mapped by seven typologically important elements; schemes (models) of this segmentation can be found below (see Tables 1-6, 8).

*Table 1*

**The First Model of Segmentation of Ethnocultural Identification Space in the Republic of Kazakhstan**

I	<b>Autochthonous population, titular nation: Kazakhs</b>
	<b>All other ethnic groups</b>

The first version of the Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan defined Kazakhs as the state-forming nation. This definition was removed from the second edition, but the dichotomy still prevails in the minds of many citizens and even within the scientific-expert community of Kazakhstan. There are two alternative strategies of nation-building and the policy of identity that fully correspond to this segmentation type and remain in the center of socio-political discourse in Kazakhstan.<sup>8</sup>

The first strategy is targeted at building up a single Kazakhstan nation out of a polyethnic society on the basis of civil self-identification of members of all ethnic groups. The civil identity of any nation presupposes formal and legal equality of all ethnic groups; it takes shape irrespective of ethnocultural identity. Jürgen Habermas has offered the most consistent position in his doctrine of reasonable-legal republicanism and constitutional patriotism.

Those who support the strategy of nation-building are convinced that the idea of a single (“civil”) nation in Kazakhstan is contradictory because ethnic self-identification of any individual will inevitably prevail over his identity in communication with members of other ethnic groups, hence over his civil identity. In view of the special role of the titular nation in state construction, Kazakh culture should serve as the foundation of Kazakhstan society that will unite the cultures of all diasporas around itself.

Wang Zhuojun and He Hualing have identified two fundamentally different approaches (the conflict approach and the consistency approach) to the correlation between ethnocultural and national identities: “The conflict approach asserts that although national identity and ethnocultural identity are connected, they are essentially conflicting opposites, because the integration of national identity requires that ethnic groups’ distinctive features be suppressed. For this reason, the heterogeneity of different ethnic groups needs to be restricted or eliminated for the sake of the integration of a unified ‘state people’ or political community. The consistency approach, on the other hand, believes

<sup>8</sup> See, for example: V.Yu. Dunaev, V.D. Kurganskaya, “Poniatie natsii i strategii natsionalno-gosudarstvennogo stroitelstva,” in: *Sovremennye globalnye vyzovy i natsionalnye interesy: XV Mezhdunarodnye Likhachevskie nauchnye chtenia, 14-15 May, 2015*, St. Petersburg State University, St. Petersburg, 2015, pp. 312-315; *Obshchenatsionalnaia idea Kazakhstana: opyt filosofskogo i politologicheskogo analiza*, Institute of Philosophy and Law, Ministry of Education and Science, RK, Almaty, 2006, pp. 5-11.

that the state is a community created through the positive action of people who have a ‘we-group consciousness’.”<sup>9</sup>

Kazakhstan as a state is coping with the dilemma of civil and ethnocultural identity models, unification of communities of compatriots and of citizens on the basis of compromise, the efforts to draw extremes closer together and find a common denominator of contradictory we-group interests. This strategy has demonstrated its efficiency; on the other hand, it is an object of criticism from both sides.

The model based on the “meaningful interpretation of civil identity in which not only a patchwork of ethnic cultures, but also the spiritual and moral content and the basic values of homogenous common Kazakhstan culture take the legal form of a civil nation”<sup>10</sup> is an alternative to the formalism of civil nationalism and particularism of ethnocultural nationalism. This model of *qualified citizenship* that “organically combines the features of civil and cultural self-identification”<sup>11</sup> rests on a firm foundation and has viable prospects.

Dispositions of the spatial organization of ethnocultural space can be found in modern societies as well, Kazakhstan being no exception. The first of the models is an example of a concentric system in which Kazakhs occupy the center while all other ethnic groups are spread across periphery. The other six models offer mainly decentralized or polycentric dichotomies or trichotomies within the ethnocultural identity space of Kazakhstan society. The concentric scheme, however, in an apparent or latent form, is present in all segmented models; this makes them heteronomous and unbalanced.

*Table 2*

**The Second Model of Segmentation of Ethnocultural Identification Space in the Republic of Kazakhstan**

<b>II</b>	<b>Autochthonous ethnicity: Kazakhs</b>
	<b>Ethnic groups that live in Kazakhstan and have their own national states: Russians, Ukrainians, Byelorussians, Uzbeks, Azeris, Germans, Poles, Koreans, Greeks, Jews and others</b>
	<b>Ethnicities that live in the Republic of Kazakhstan and have no national states in their historical homeland: Kurds, Uyghurs, Dungsans</b>

All these groups differ significantly when it comes to their attitude to the Kazakhstani national-state identity. Kazakhs look at Kazakhstan as the only country where they can achieve national-state self-determination. Members of the second group establish a compromise between Kazakhstan and their “historical homeland” as part of their identification strategies. The third group aims to attain autonomy of some sorts as one of their goals very much needed to preserve their social and cultural identities.

The specifics of the Kazakhstan model of state ethnic politics and self-regulation of interethnic cooperation is determined, to a great extent, by the rivalry between two ethnic groups—Kazakhs and Russians—for a better social niche, wider access to resources, higher status and privileges in all spheres of social life; both want to consolidate their cultural standards and spread them as widely as possible, etc.

<sup>9</sup> W. Zhuojun, H. Hualing, “National Identity in the Era of Globalization: Crisis and Reconstruction,” *Social Sciences in China*, Vol. 35, No. 2, 2014, p. 141

<sup>10</sup> *Formirovanie Kazakhstanskoy identichnosti v kontekste zadach modernizatsii obshchestvennogo soznanaia*, Book 1, Institute of Philosophy and Law, Ministry of Education and Science, RK, Almaty, 2018, p. 136.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibidem*.

The ethnic composition of the Republic of Kazakhstan can be classified according to the pattern normally used in sociological polls.

*Table 3*

**The Third Model of Segmentation of Ethnocultural Identification Space in the Republic of Kazakhstan**

<b>III</b>	<b>Kazakhs and Russians as the largest ethnic groups</b>
	<b>Other ethnicities as ethnic minorities</b>

*Table 4*

**The Fourth Model of Segmentation of Ethnocultural Identification Space in the Republic of Kazakhstan**

<b>IV</b>	<b>Kazakhs</b>
	<b>Russians</b>
	<b>Other ethnicities (ethnic minorities)</b>

In ethnic competition ethnic minorities normally trail behind both Kazakhs and Russians. The Constitution and the laws of Kazakhstan ban all form of discrimination for ethnic, racial and religious reasons. The real position of ethnic minorities in Kazakhstan fully corresponds to the concept of an ethnic minority as a social group the members of which are limited by the social functioning parameters. Situated at the periphery of state and political life, national minorities are even more concerned about getting access to the ideological, political, economic and sociocultural resources of power than the ethnic majority.

*Table 5*

**The Fifth Model of Segmentation of Ethnocultural Identification Space in the Republic of Kazakhstan**

<b>V</b>	<b>Ethnicities that treat Hanafi Islam as their national religion</b>
	<b>Ethnicities whose culture has been historically oriented towards Orthodox Christianity</b>
	<b>Ethnocultural groups that feel related to other confessions and denominations than Hanafi Islam and Orthodoxy</b>

Religion is not very important in the social and political life of Kazakhstan, which is a secular state; but it plays a great role in the existential self-identification of Kazakhstanis. The sociological poll conducted by the Institute of Philosophy, Political Science and Religious Studies in 2018 showed the following distribution of answers about the importance of different identity types (see Diagram 1).<sup>12</sup>

Religion perfectly copes with the function of ethnic differentiation and identification at the everyday level through rites, rituals, symbols, holydays, etc. Self-identification of the Kazakhstanis is very specific: ethnic and confessional identities practically coincide in mass consciousness.

<sup>12</sup> See: *Formirovanie Kazakhstanskoy identichnosti...*, p. 142.

Diagram 1

Which of the Identities is the Most Important for You?  
(% to the polled)

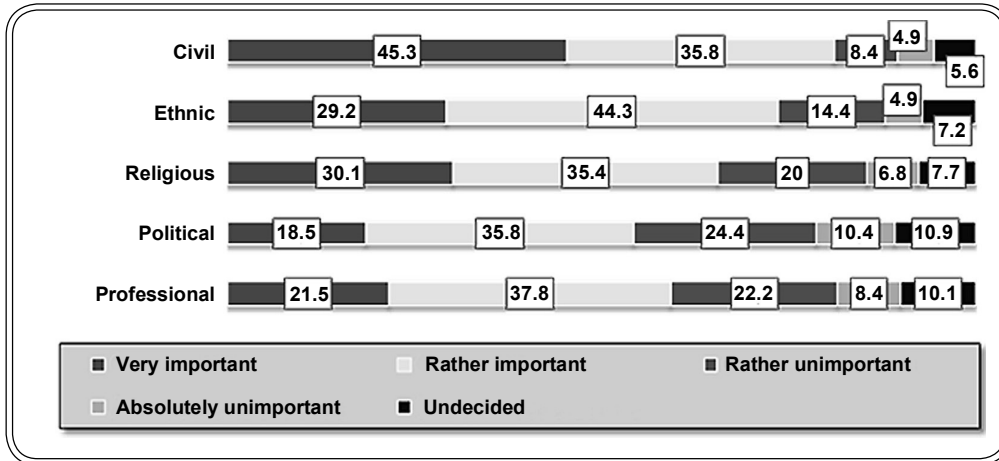


Table 6

The Sixth Model of Segmentation of Ethnocultural Identification Space in the Republic of Kazakhstan

VI	Turkic-speaking ethnic groups
	Russian-speaking ethnic groups
	Bi- and trilingual ethnolinguistic groups

The sociological poll conducted by the Institute of Democracy identified the following linguistic identification characteristics among the ethnic groups of Kazakhstan<sup>13</sup>:

- (a) more varied linguistic identification among the respondents of other ethnic groups against the Russian and Kazakh respondents;
- (b) the highest self-assessment by bi-lingual Kazakhs;
- (c) the greater number of respondents of other ethnicities who spoke of themselves as trilingual;
- (d) practically identical linguistic and ethnic identities among Russian respondents (see Table 7).

According to sociological studies, it is the linguistic identification that causes the deepest emotional ethnocultural and intraethnic contradiction (see below). On the whole, it is the sociolinguistic

<sup>13</sup> See: З.К. Шәуқенова, Е.Е. Буrowa, Ә.Қ. Назарбетова, *Қазақстан Республикасы этностық және діни топтарының азаматтық қауымдастыққа топтасуының құндылықтық-мағыналық және рухани-адамгершілік негіздері*, Монография, ҚР БҒМ ҒК Философия, саясаттану және дінтану институты, Алматы, 2014, pp. 17-18 (Z.K. Shaukenova, E.E. Burova, A.K. NazarbetoBa, Value-semantic and Spiritual-moral Foundations of the Consolidation of Ethnic and Religious Groups of the Republic of Kazakhstan into a Civil Community, Monograph, Institute of Philosophy, Political Science and Religious Studies, KN MON RK, Almaty, 2014, pp. 17-18).



matrix that determines the structure of axiological philosophical, social, economic and political fields of Kazakhstan society. At the same time, the attitude of citizens and authorities to population groups that use different languages directly depends on the state's ethnic politics.

*Table 7*

**How do You Principally Identify Yourself Linguistically? (%)**

	Turkic Speaker	Russian Speaker	Bilingual	Trilingual	Undecided
<b>Kazakhs</b>	<b>48.5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>40.3</b>	<b>3.8</b>	<b>2.4</b>
<b>Russians</b>	<b>1.3</b>	<b>91.4</b>	<b>4.8</b>	<b>1.1</b>	<b>1.4</b>
<b>Others</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>51.9</b>	<b>22.7</b>	<b>11.7</b>	<b>0.7</b>

The term that any ethnicity spent in the territory of any given state affects, to a certain extent, the modalities of its identification with the national state. The seventh model is being built on this very basis.

*Table 8*

**The Seventh Model of Segmentation of Ethnocultural Identification Space in the Republic of Kazakhstan**

<b>VII</b>	<b>Ethnic groups deported to Kazakhstan: peoples of the Caucasus and Baltic states; Germans, Koreans, Poles</b>
	<b>Ethnic groups that settled in Kazakhstan in different historical periods: Russians, Ukrainians, Byelorussians, Dungans</b>
	<b>Ethnicities that have been living in Kazakhstan (irredenta) from time immemorial: Kazakhs, Uzbeks, Kyrgyz, Uyghurs</b>

This means that there are certain factors involved in the division of Kazakhstan society into ethnic segments; each has its specifics, it is differently understood by people and creates highly specific problems in ethnocultural and national self-identification, in interethnic and intercultural interactions and in the relations between ethnic groups and the institutions of state power.

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### **3. Stratification of Space of the Intraethnic Identity of the Kazakhs**

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As distinct from the extensive Cartesian-Kantian space, the space of identification is a field of intensities. In its system of coordinates the condition of a certain normal or positive identity serves as the reckoning point from which two vectors are drawn in opposite directions—the vectors of hyper- and hypo-identities. Ranking can be as detailed as is needed by the aims of the project and the meth-

odology used, yet the general principle of assessment can be described as identification of the scopes of detraction from the norm along the hyper- and hypo-identities vector. In full conformity with this approach, the type of ethnic identity typical of contemporary Kazakhs can be defined as a fairly clear *hyper-identity*.<sup>14</sup>

It should be said that hypertrophied interests of Kazakhs seeking and attempting to restore their ethnocultural identity is rooted in the centuries-long suppression and marginalization of this identity. The weaker interethnic rivalry<sup>15</sup> intensifies intraethnic competition and adds value to subethnic identities.

In recent years, this subject has been attracting a steadily growing number of researchers. Academic publications and the media are full of new definitions of the strata within the Kazakh ethnicity. The popular metaphors derived from literature—*mankurt*, *shala-kazak* and *nagyz kazak*<sup>16</sup>—found their places in publicist writings and academic discourse.<sup>17</sup>

Kazakh identity includes numerous dispositions of supraethnic and subethnic fields of social identity. For example, the urban and countryside types of settlement: urban and countryside subcultures are also regarded as cultures of polyethnic and monoethnic environments. Recently, considerable flows of mainly young people have been moving from villages to cities. The traditional type of thinking of the “new urban dwellers” cannot compete with the contemporary critical, purposeful and rational thinking that the urbanized part of Kazakhstan community is mastering more or less successfully.

As distinct from the absolute majority of the ethnicities in Kazakhstan, the identification strategies of the Kazakhs include division into tribes and clans along with the phenomenon of neo-tribalism. Members of rich and noble families or influential clans have significantly more chances to successfully identify themselves and, therefore, occupy a prestigious place in the social hierarchy. Today, very much as before, personal and group relationships between traditional Kazakhs who arrive from auls (villages) are based on the genealogical principle of identification, regional (territorial) division or on *Zemliachestvo* (mutual assistance of people from the same aul.—*Ed.*). Urban Kazakhs who have lost their ethnotypical features pay little attention to genealogical identification in personal relationships.

Genealogical and territorial identity as important elements of the Kazakh ethnic identification intensifies the revival of the traditional division into tribes and deepens intraethnic stratification inside the linguistically divided people. The gradual increase of symbolic importance of tribal, Zhuz and regional identifications as a historically inalienable part of ethnocultural identity of the Kazakhs might in the future disunite the Kazakh ethnic nation, prevent social mobility and slow down its progress on the path to becoming a political nation.

Language was and remains the main factor of shaping Kazakh national identity. The Kazakh-speaking and the Russian-speaking spaces as well as the bilingual and monolingual environments are the main forms of stratification of the space of ethnic identification of Kazakhstan society as a whole and the Kazakh nation.

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<sup>14</sup> See: M.S. Shaykemelev, *Kazakhskaya identichnost*, monograph. Ed. by Z.K. Shaukenova, Institute of Philosophy, Political Science and Religious Studies, KN MON RK, Almaty, 2013, p. 41.

<sup>15</sup> This is caused by several processes. First, a growing share of Kazakhs in the Republic’s population, as well as the preferences extended to people with good command of the state language when it comes to key posts in the social, political, and cultural spheres.

<sup>16</sup> *Mankurtism*, a neologism coined by famous Kyrgyz writer Chinghiz Aitmantov to define a morally inconsistent person who lost touch with his history. *Shala-kazak*—Kazakh by half, an individual who does not speak his native tongue (historically, this term was applied to children born into mixed families (in which one of the parents was Bashkir, Nogai, etc.); *nagyz kazak*—true Kazakh.

<sup>17</sup> See: M.S. Shaykemelev, *op. cit.*, p. 159.

We have divided the Kazakhs into three groups according to their language command:

- (1) Kazakhs who live in the countryside, speak perfect Kazakh, but find it hard to communicate with Russian speakers;
- (2) Bilingual Kazakhs who know both tongues well enough to freely communicate with all ethnic groups in Kazakhstan;
- (3) Marginal Kazakhs who do not know the Kazakh language or know it at the level of personal communication.<sup>18</sup>

The Kazakhs from the first group are the main carriers of the mental pattern typical of the ethnic nation, of its language, traditions, customs and ethnic temperament. In this stratum, ethnic identity is obvious and fairly aggressive.

The group of bilingual Kazakhs dominates because of its size, pragmatism and extreme adaptability. Unlike the members of the first group, they do not fear to dilute or lose their identity, and watch the pendulum of nation-building with a great degree of pragmatism

The marginal Kazakhs comprise the smallest group that is perfectly adapted to urban culture and market psychology. Its members are not quite comfortable in collective or personal communication with members of the first group.

The seventh of our models of stratification of spaces of ethnic identity relies on the period and historical causes of the presence of any of the ethnic groups in the state of Kazakhstan. An analysis of the specifics of Kazakh identity gives us a chance to complicate this model still further by including the Kazakh ethnic repatriates as yet another stratum.

Nearly one million of repatriates who moved to Kazakhstan when it became independent caused a paradoxical change in the stratification of the space of Kazakh identity. American researcher Alexander C. Diener who studied the status of Kazakh repatriates from Mongolia has pointed out: "... changes in the cultural and demographic character of Kazakhstan have impeded the integration within that country (following return migration) of members of a multi-generational ethnic Kazakh community from Mongolia."<sup>19</sup> In particular, "Mongolian Kazakhs" were confronted with the wide use of spoken and written Russian language in the places of their settlement, which, unlike the Kazakhs of Kazakhstan, they did not know. Different mentalities and different cultures (Alexander Diener points to the cultural "purity in exile" of the traditional "Kazakhness" of the Mongolian Kazakhs) did not allow many of the repatriates to integrate in the multicultural and rapidly modernizing society of their "historical homeland." Alexander Diener offers a very typical opinion of one of the repatriates: "Many of us grew up as herdsmen. We live as Kazakhs lived in history; our homes and tools are things you see in Kazakhstan's museums, but we use them in our lives. We speak Kazakh in our streets—not just in our kitchens. I think Kazakhs in Kazakhstan changed during socialism, they became more sophisticated, more like Russians, and we remain as Kazakhs."<sup>20</sup>

This means that "... the preservation of 'traditional Kazakh culture' has become a point of pride ~~among the Kazakh-Mongolian community in general, serving as an obstacle to integration of migrants in their historic homeland.~~"<sup>21</sup> This is a unique situation, the only one of its kind; this confirms that the space of ethnonational identity of the titular nation in contemporary Kazakhstan is highly complex and paradoxical.

<sup>18</sup> See: *Ibid.*, p. 153.

<sup>19</sup> A.C. Diener, "Problematic Integration of Mongolian-Kazakh Return Migrants in Kazakhstan," *Eurasian Geography and Economics*, Vol. 46, No. 6, 2005, p. 466.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 471.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 468.

## 4. The Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan as an Institutional Form of the Space of Ethnonational Identity

Western experts insist that the regime in Kazakhstan does not suit the majority of procedural demands of democracy<sup>22</sup> and that its liberal-democratic institutional forms are devoid of a legitimate liberal-democratic content.<sup>23</sup> American sociologists Kristoffer Michael Rees and Nora Webb Williams have written: “The institutional structure of the Assembly can be interpreted as a way for the regime to superficially demonstrate alignment with internationally accepted normative ideals of multiculturalism and interethnic unity. In other words, the Assembly is one of the soft-authoritarian institutions, that is, liberal-democratic in form.”<sup>24</sup>

They explain the emergence of the Assembly and its functioning as an institution of “façade democracy of the semi-authoritarian state”<sup>25</sup> by direct influence of Western normative theories of formal articulation (for an international audience) of the policy of Kazakhstan identity. Therefore when discussing “the role of the Assembly as a ‘unique’ Kazakhstani approach to ensuring interethnic harmony”<sup>26</sup> they use inverted commas for the word unique. Meanwhile, the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan is,

- first of all, a unique institutional form of ethnopolitics that is absolutely authentic for our republic; it is endogenous and is not a model of multiculturalism borrowed from the arsenal of liberal democracies of the West.<sup>27</sup>
- Secondly, it is a fuller and more solid implementation of the liberal-democratic principles and values than many of the institutions of ethnopolitics of the so-called “consolidated democracies.”

In our country the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan is the main instrument of regulation of interethnic relations. Not a state institution *de jure*, it was set up to deal with the state’s nationalities policies, while *de facto* it is one of the elements of the comprehensive state-public regulation of interethnic and interconfessional relationships.

As an institution or a social infrastructure designed to consolidate public cohesion and unity of the polyethnic and multicultural society, it is unique because it is integrated into the system of civil society and state authority, as well as because of the homogenous nature of its impact on the sphere of regulation of interethnic relations stemming from its status. There are several basic levels at which

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<sup>22</sup> See: “Freedom in the World 2015: Kazakhstan,” Freedom House, 11 October, 2015, available at [<https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/freedom-world-2015#.VhrB93pVhBc>], 17 July, 2019.

<sup>23</sup> See: E. Schatz, “The Soft Authoritarian Tool Kit: Agenda-Setting Power in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan,” *Comparative Politics*, No. 41 (2), 2009, pp. 203-222.

<sup>24</sup> See: K.M. Rees, N.W. Williams, “Explaining Kazakhstani Identity: Supraethnic Identity, Ethnicity, Language, and Citizenship,” 2016, available at [[https://www.academia.edu/28507832/Explaining\\_Kazakhstani\\_Identity\\_Supraethnic\\_identity\\_ethnicity\\_language\\_and\\_citizenship](https://www.academia.edu/28507832/Explaining_Kazakhstani_Identity_Supraethnic_identity_ethnicity_language_and_citizenship)], 15 July, 2019, p. 13.

<sup>25</sup> See: *Ibid.*, p. 36.

<sup>26</sup> See: *Ibid.*, p. 14.

<sup>27</sup> In Western countries, transfer to the policy of multiculturalism was accompanied by creation of all sorts of institutional forms of support of associations of ethnocultural minorities, special services and programs. In many countries, however, there are no special state institutions designed to regulate ethnic relationships which is also nothing of the ordinary. In some polyethnic states, there are state structures for the affairs of nationalities, national politics, multiculturalism, etc. Such is, for example, the Ministry for Multiculturalism and the Canadian Consultative Council on Multiculturalism (later renamed Ethnocultural Council) set up by the Federal Government of Canada in 1973.

the Assembly institutionalizes interethnic relationships and perfects the technologies of political management:

1. By coordinating the activities of national-cultural associations, the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan (APK) develops *the institutions of self-administration of civil society* in the sphere of interethnic relations. In the European discourse and in the political practice of multiculturalism, intercultural dialog is reduced to communication between the culture of the host society and cultures of various immigrant groups.

2. Today, multiculturalism is an evident characteristic of social reality at the level of everyday existence and the norm of organization of the public communicative space. At the same time, the changes in cultural configurations of national-territorial communities are gradually escaping the control of national states. To a gradually growing extent, these changes are determined not so much by the core of national culture as a product of history, but by transborder network structures of distribution of cultural norms and patterns.

The network type of intercultural communication is an alternative and a challenge to the hierarchically organized political institutions of a national state. The network forms of cultural identity are legitimized by the liberal democratic principles of multicultural politics. The APK is a unique institution of intercultural dialog: it *institutionalizes the network form of intercultural communication between ethnic groups*.

3. The Constitutional reform of 2007 consolidated the positions of the APK as an institution with a Constitutional status which guaranteed Kazakhstan's ethnicities representation in the parliament.

This made the APK a Constitutional structure with a Constitutional status of *an entity of representative democracy*. These political functions define its Constitutional status as

(a) *coordinator* and

(b) *independent entity of state ethnic policies* (all decisions of its highest structure—the Session—should be discussed and fulfilled by all bodies of state power).

4. The First President of the Republic of Kazakhstan acquired the right to head the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan for life and to determine the trends of its work. This has made the Assembly an *institution of direct or identitarian democracy* in the sphere of realization of the ethnocultural policy of the state.

The identitarian democracy concept as a “transmuted form” of direct rule by people relies on the axiologically meaningful ideals of civil self-government as a genuinely legitimate institution of political power and the only subject of political will.

According to the theory of the homogenous nature of the “political organism” formulated by Jean Jacques Rousseau the First President represents the principle of common will and common welfare; he stands above all private unities and limited interests that set in motion the mechanisms of representative democracy. The identitarian modality of democracy is obviously indispensable when it comes to coping with social fragmentation as the main set of risks created by multiculturalism.

5. Neither the state per se nor civil society on its own can create an efficient mechanism of managing the risks of multiculturalism and a system of mechanisms aimed to prevent negative trends in the sphere of interethnic relationships and neutralization of all possible threats. The Concept of the Development of the Assembly until 2025 has formulated the following tasks:

- (1) greater role of the APK as the coordinator of the efforts of all state structures at all levels and civil society institutions in consolidating public accord, Kazakhstan identity and unity as the key factor of successful realization of the Kazakhstan-2050 Strategy;
- (2) introduction of new formats of interaction between the state and ethnocultural and other public associations for the sake of stronger public accord and national unity.<sup>28</sup>

The Concept has established that the APK is de facto an institution of comprehensive state-public regulation of interethnic relations and an *important link* between the political system and civil society. As such it should *institutionalize direct ties and feedback* between the structures of state governance and public organizations to ensure their efficient interaction in the sphere of harmonization of interethnic relationships.

This means that in the course of its institutionalized development, the APK became a full-fledged *institution of the republic's political system*; on the other hand, it has been transformed into an *institution of people's diplomacy*. This combination allows the APK to manage the risks of multiculturalism comprehensively and, therefore, efficiently.

Rees and Williams have rightly identified the dilemma of ethnocentric and civil identities as the main one in the process of nation-building in the multiethnic Kazakhstan state: "We begin by reviewing treatments of these nation-building dilemmas by liberal theorists of multiculturalism to provide an analytical framework against which we can evaluate the efforts of the Kazakhstani state to create a civically defined Kazakhstani nation."<sup>29</sup> The term "multiculturalism" that had gained popularity in the 1960s has acquired the status of the main concept of neo-liberal ideology twenty years later, towards the end of the 1980s. After Switzerland, Canada, Australia and the United States, many countries confronted by the growing cultural heterogeneity accepted the ideas of multiculturalism that they described as "the flagship project of liberal democracy."<sup>30</sup> By the end of the 20th century the situation started moving in the opposite direction. The national patriotic circles resolutely rejected multiculturalism, while the intellectual elites' refined criticism, as well as the panic stirred up in the ranks of the leaders of some of the largest European countries by the results of the multiculturalism policy, added oil to the fire. The threats and challenges that stemmed from the policy of multiculturalism revealed the vulnerability and obvious inefficiency of its conceptual foundations and of the social and political technologies of the neoliberal project of the multicultural society. Inadequate inclusion of immigrants in social, cultural, economic and civil life of host societies was one of the obstacles on the road towards new supraethnic identity.

This makes the decision of Rees and Williams to build their analysis of the Kazakhstan experience of nation-building on the concept of liberal multiculturalism highly doubtful. It seems that an opposite approach looks relevant and methodologically justified: this experience may serve as the new foundation of transformations of the ideology of multiculturalism.

Today, the policy of multiculturalism as an encouragement of ethnocultural variety seems like a challenge to national and state unity. We have tried to demonstrate that the strategic priority of state policy that supports ethnocultural variety is a consolidation of civilian, political, cultural and spiritual unity of people "*based upon acknowledging a common system of values and principles for all citizens of the country*."<sup>31</sup> The APK has become indispensable as one of the forms of institutionalization of basic values shared by all ethnocultural groups in the Kazakhstan society and as a structural element of nation-building and identity policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

<sup>28</sup> See: Decree of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan 148 28.12.2015 "Ob utverzhdenii Kontseptsii razvitiia Assamblei Kazakhstana do 2025 goda," available at [<http://adilet.zan.kz/rus/docs/U1500000148>], 17 July, 2019.

<sup>29</sup> K.M. Rees, N.W. Williams, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

<sup>30</sup> S. Stimer, "Questioning Multiculturalism, 2012," available at [<http://www.metamodernism.com/2012/03/28/liberal-multiculturalism-and-the-metanarrative-trap/>], 14 July, 2019.

<sup>31</sup> Doctrine of the National Unity of Kazakhstan, available at [[http://www.kazakhstan-bern.ch/en/?page\\_id=426](http://www.kazakhstan-bern.ch/en/?page_id=426)].

## *Conclusion*

The above suggests the following general conclusions:

1. The polyethnic nature of the society of the Republic of Kazakhstan, which is the result of its history, makes the task of shaping the community of Kazakhstan ethnicities into a structure of common citizenship essential, even though difficult. As distinct from several forms of realization of the idea of multiculturalism that have already discredited themselves, Kazakhstan's model of interethnic interaction and national harmony remains its philosophical and conceptual foundation. Other countries can learn a lot from the republic's experience of creating new fields of synthetic and polycultural identities as an approach to the problem that so far defies efficient and adequate algorithms.
  2. The space of ethnonational identities of Kazakhstan society can be defined as fragmented rather than atomized or integrated even if a variety of atomistic (*Gemeinschaft*) and organic (*Gesellschaft*) modalities of social ties are present at the level of individual ethnicities. Construction of the best model of stratification of ethnonational identities' social spaces can be described as a movement towards the optimal methods of proliferation in the minds of the ideas of humanism, principles of ethnic tolerance, equality of citizens and nations before the law; prevention of outcrops of national extremism, national phobias and ethnic discrimination.
  3. The general picture of stratification of the ethnonational identities' space of Kazakhstan society should be based on a sociological analysis of deformations of the internal space of the Kazakhs' national identity. This space interferes with the fields of interethnic cooperation and common Kazakhstan identity, while being strongly affected by supranational global trends of identification models.
  4. Specifics of the space of intraethnic identity of the Kazakhs create several fairly complicated theoretical and practical problems in public politics. For example, the specifics of the traditional Kazakh culture and their mentality are often seen as the reasons why Kazakhs should implement their mission of consolidating Kazakhstan's ethnicities into a united political nation. So far, little attention is paid to the structural aspects of consolidation models. We attempted to demonstrate that the structure of intraethnic identity of the Kazakhs that is taking shape is fairly contradictory and that, therefore, the projects of transferring the ethnocultural identity of the titular nation to the structures of common Kazakhstan identity should take into account the fact that the quality of space of intraethnic identity should be transformed.
  5. This transformation is needed to bring the intraethnic space of identity into conformity with the parameters of the supraethnic space of qualified citizenship. This is the most essential trend in political culture of the population of Kazakhstan; it should be built on pluralism of ideas about the world, cultural polyphony, unity and cohesion of social subjects.
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