

## KAZAKH CULTURE IN THE CONTEXT OF THE TRADITIONAL CIVILIZATIONS OF ASIA

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### ABSTRACT

**T**his article focuses on determining the place and role of the Kazakh culture in the Eurasian civilizational area. It examines the choice of sociocultural development models for the Republic of Kazakhstan in globalization and localization condi-

tions. The Kazakh culture is identified in the context of its interaction with the nomadic, Islamic, Russian, Central Asian, and East Asian civilizations. It analyzes the role of cultural factors in building the new post-Soviet Central Asian states.

**KEYWORDS:** *Kazakhstan, culture, identification, civilization, Eurasianism, East and West, traditions and innovations, nomadism, Islam.*

## *Introduction*

The claims for cultural sovereignty put forward by the post-Soviet states are drawing different responses; many find them unsubstantiated. This assessment is usually based on the modest resources at the disposal of the new “contenders” for sovereignty. Upon closer investigation, however, cultural heritage and the symbols that the elites of the post-Soviet states would like to use as national proved to be part of a broader civilizational area.

Nevertheless, despite all the apparent irrationality of such efforts, they are entirely substantiated.

- First, the contemporary world political system is the sum-total of all *the states*. The states are regarded as sovereign units that are seats of power or so-called receptacles of power. Let us clarify that we are talking not only about military-political and economic power, but also about cultural power. So the attempts by states to position themselves as homogeneous nations are fully justified; this strategy makes it possible for them to improve their position in the global rivalry. In this way, the state will have to make a choice between two possible alternatives: either force other nations to treat it as an autonomous cultural and political whole, or present itself as “not entirely” a state.
- Second, these efforts are seen as a striving toward self-assertion and, if you like, revenge; to this we can add the extraordinary popularity that the discourse on so-called post-colonialism gained at the beginning of the 1970s. In other words, by claiming to restore their supposedly desecrated authenticity, the post-Soviet states are only playing according to the rules posed by the global community, and their nationalism is nothing other than subordination to transnational political imperatives.

In the era of the triumph of nationalism, the standoff between the local and the national looks like opposition between the particular and the universal. In so doing, the local (regional) was opposed to the national as part of the whole. In the globalization era, the national finds itself in the position of the local (particular).<sup>1</sup>

Complaints that some transnational powers are threatening the cultural uniqueness of a particular nation have already become par for the course. Globalization, which gives a boost to unification and diversification, is also capable of standardizing (McDonaldization) and augmenting cultural diversity. The world cultural market is in dire need of “nonidentity,” which has always been a headache for nation-states; the transnational companies functioning in this sphere are true so-called authenticity hunters. While striving to meet the existing demand for exoticism, they are looking for, finding,

<sup>1</sup> See: *The Global Studies Dictionary*, ed. by Alexander N. Chumakov, Ivan I. Mazour, and William C. Gay, Prometheus Books, Amherst, New York, 2007.

and promoting “cultural products” that could be offered to buyers as non-commercial, alternative, non-conformist, and so on.<sup>2</sup>

## Traditions and Innovations of the Kazakh Culture

In the context of the aforesaid, we will examine the correlation between the indigenous and the superimposed in the Kazakh culture. Islam is the nucleus of the unified identification field of the Kazakhs and Turkic peoples on the whole. If we abstract ourselves from Soviet Marxism’s thesis that this religion was imposed on the Turkic peoples by the Arabs, the following aspects of this problem can be identified:

- (a) Islam has had a civilizational influence on the culture of the Turkic peoples;
- (b) Islam promoted an upswing in the culture of the Turkic peoples in the 9th-12th centuries (the Turkic philosophy of this period occupied one of the leading positions in the world philosophical process);
- (c) in terms of Russia and China’s colonization of the Turkic peoples, Islam contested the assimilation policy of these empires and performed an ethnic-preserving function;
- (d) the Turkic peoples took advantage of the Arab-speaking philosophy to become acquainted with the cultural heritage of antiquity.

Not only did Islam have a portentous influence on the spiritual culture of the Turkic peoples, the Turkic neophytes helped to spread and reinforce it. It is enough to recall the Kara-Khanid Khanate, the Great Mughal Empire, Iran, the Ottoman state, and so on.

The Turkic culture as a whole and the Kazakh in particular are distinguished by internal unity that is not based either on racial characteristics (the Turkic peoples are mainly transitional forms between the Indo-European and Mongoloid races), or on cultural-economic types (nomads, oasis and river valley farmers, city-dwellers), or on religious confessions (different trends of Islam, Orthodox believers, Shamanists, Buddhists, and so on), or on political systems (democratic and totalitarian regimes, autonomies, independent peoples, and so on).

So what unites the views of the different Turkic ethnicities into a single world outlook system? We believe the main elements to be a common language, historical memory about the heroic past, and ethnically oriented mythology and folklore, in other words, archetypes of spiritual experience.

The marginalized mind of the contemporary Turk has an irrepressible striving for self-realization, but much remains unsaid and undone. The uniqueness of the Turkic culture lies in its intrinsic combination of traditions and openness toward innovations and the nomadic and settled understanding of the world (sacral, profane, and chthonian); it is characterized by tolerance, love of freedom, originality of word, and optimism.

The main world outlook universals of the Kazakhs are determined by both the immanent spiritual experience of the people and a realm of its cultural dialogs (Turkic-Chinese, Turkic-Soghdian, Turkic-Arabic, and Turkic-Slavic syntheses). In addition to such categories as “existence,” “man,” “world,” “space,” “time,” etc., there are unique world outlook and philosophical universals in Turkic philosophy: “*kut*,” “*kanagat*,” “*nesibe*,” “*nysap*,” “*obal*” and “*sauap*,” “*kie*,” “*kesir*,” “*el*,”

<sup>2</sup> See: T. Grushevitskaia, “Inkulturationsiia i sotsializatsiia,” available at [www.countries.ru /library/ intercult/ mkis.htm].

“*aleumet*,” “*kisi*,” etc. These concepts can only be translated into different languages when preserving the context in which they are used.

Even in its most Islamized forms, Turkic philosophy has never fully departed from its ancient roots. For example, it is no accident that Hoja Ahmet Yassauï is still considered a Sufi preacher who is mentally close to the nomadic world outlook; in his manuscript *Diuani Khikmet*, pre-Islamic personalities are often found—“*erens*,” “*chiltens*,” “*mugans*,” “*aruakhs*,” “*ancestors*,” and so on.<sup>3</sup>

A topic running throughout Yusuf Balasaguni’s poem *Blessed Knowledge* is the harmony between nature and man; in it he also mentions the universal Turkic cultural hero Alp Er Tunga.<sup>4</sup>

Nomadic gnosis, which is based on the tradition of passing on sacral knowledge orally and not recognizing a fixated, final, and frozen state, is characterized by a search for particular harmony between man and the world; from this it follows that Turkic philosophy is essentially dialogical and discursive.

In the ternary Turkic model of the world, man acts as its axis. The world is not isolated from him; it is humanized and endowed with every human quality. It is not borrowed terms such as “*adam*” or “*pende*” that represent the central concept of Turkic philosophical anthropology, but “*kisi*” (the human dimension in man). In contrast to the “man-deer” (Yusuf Balasaguni), present-day man is the bearer of genuine moral and sociocultural qualities and always strives to remain so.

The image of “kinsman” characterizing the nomadic lifestyle that became established in the literature is rejected by a sociocultural analysis of the nomadic community of the Turkic peoples. Such features inherent in the nomadic society as love of freedom, openness, and mobility caused the following individualized types to be singled out from the community: *batyr*, *akyn*, *zhyrau*, *sal*, *seri*, *baksy*, *bi*, and so on.

When drawing a historical parallel, it can be recalled that Anacharsis, a Scythian thinker of antiquity and one of the “seven sages of the world,” doubted the ancient ideas about morality and contrasted the high spirituality of the nomads to them.<sup>5</sup>

The Orkhon-Yenise (Old Turkic) written records are full of warnings about the danger of borrowing the morals and behavioral stereotypes of the Tabgashs (Chinese). The legendary Korkyt Ata is looking for the meaning of life and wants to find the way to eternal life; Abai calls on him to be a man. The ethic inclination of Turkic spirituality can clearly be seen even in these brief sentiments.

The following can be described as special features of the traditional ethics of the Kazakhs:

- syncretism of reason (truth), aesthetics (beauty), and ethics (good);
- widespread binary oppositions: life and death, good and evil, joy and sorrow, body and soul, sacral and profane, satisfaction and self-restriction, and so on;
- philosophemes are presented in an ethic framework (for example, the four origins of the world and man mentioned by Yusuf Balasaguni);
- rootedness in the environment and harmony with it;
- understanding honor and conscience as the foundations of the teaching on morals (for example, in Shakarim);
- significance of the eminence of origin;
- coincidence of moral and human qualities;
- gerontarchical priorities of morality;

<sup>3</sup> See: A. Yassauï, *Diuani khikmet*, al-Kheda, Tehran, 2000, 162 pp. (in Kazakh).

<sup>4</sup> See: Zh. Balasuguni, *Kutty bilik*, Zhazushi, Almaty, 1986, 616 pp. (in Kazakh).

<sup>5</sup> See: S. Aiazbekova, *Kartina mira etnosa: Korkut-ata i filozofia muzyki kazakhov*, Print, Almaty, 1999, 285 pp.

- honoring women and respect for children;
- identification of nomadic and kinship forms of human solidarity and consent;
- developed institution of hospitality, and so on.

The oral-poetic discourse of the bearers of Kazakh philosophy and the individualized forms of folk wisdom are essentially dialogical. For instance, in addition to expressing the existentialist state of the thinker, *tolgau* and the popular aphorisms of *beis* are always addressed to the listeners and oriented toward mutual understanding, which is achieved by sacralization and enhancement of the art of the word (you can kill a person, but you cannot stop words from freely flowing).

According to many philosophers and culturologists, the 21st century could well become the century of the Turkic culture and civilization, for which there are many reasons.

- First, in globalization conditions, the areas of contact of the contemporary world super civilizations acquire special significance. The Turkic world is located at the crossroads of the Islamic, Orthodox, Chinese, and Western civilizations; one way or another, it is under the influence of their cultures, on which it, in turn, has a significant influence.
- Second, a powerful charge of passionarity is arising in the new independent Turkic states due to the need to revive cultural roots and enter into the world civilizational community. This charge is also potent in Turkey.
- Third, the traditional values and ideas of Turkic philosophy (tolerance, the sacral word, openness, respect for traditions, receptiveness to innovations, ethnic orientation, closeness to nature, environmental consciousness, and so on) are in great demand by the contemporary world civilization.

## Dynamics and Dialog of the Traditional Cultures of Asia

A comparative analysis of sociocultural phenomena is conducive to gaining a better understanding of the role of the Kazakh culture and defining its place in the super civilizations of Asia. It should be noted that at the end of the 20th century, comparative analysis was one of the main areas of the analytical methodology of cultures and civilizations.

To shed more light on the matter, we will present a comparative classification of the cultural and historical types of Asia and Eurasia compiled by Korean academics G. Yugai and M. Pak.

Principles of Dialog and Synthesis of Culture	Types of Cultures
1. Deep-rooted synthesis leading to the stagnation of cultures.	The Tibetan culture as a synthesis of the Chinese and Indian cultures. The Byzantine culture as a synthesis of the Mediterranean East and West. The Soviet multinational culture.
2. Maximum openness in spirituality and closedness in	The Japanese culture of Shintoism based on the cult of gods and ancestors, as well as on national traditions, was integrated into the mystics of Zen Buddhism and Western rationalism in science and technology. The country ranks first in terms of amount of advanced literature. The Japanese culture

(continued)

Principles of Dialog and Synthesis of Culture	Types of Cultures
relations. Flexible synthesis of one's own and what is assimilated.	is likened to a sea anemone, the open petals of which grab its prey and remain closed until it is fully digested. This is approximately how the Jewish, Armenian, and South Korean cultures are developing. They are all known for their maximum spiritual openness while preserving their national identity.
3. Too much openness in detriment to its national traditions in culture.	The Javanese-Indonesian culture, the extreme prototype features of which were expressed in Islam and the Western culture squeezing out Buddhism and Shivaism. Relying on the marginal Eastern culture, the Western influence plunged the country into complete chaos.
4. Self-sufficiency of the great cultures of China and India.	Without worthy rivals, they completely assimilated other cultures. This is at least shown by the fate of the Jews in medieval China; some of them served to the rank of generals and ministers. At a later time, the Jews intermarried and gradually blended with the large Chinese ethnic communities.
5. East-West: dialog or Westernization?	Western cultures have had an enormous influence on all of world civilization. But Westernization of the world was limited only to creating intellectual and technical frameworks for a dialog of cultures. So more powerful in technical and economic terms, the West (particularly the U.S.) has for some time been importing spiritual mysticism from the East: Zen from Japan, Krishnaism from India, Sufism from Iran, etc.
6. The Russian culture and civilization: escaping from themselves, shame-faced, while also great and self-destructing.	In terms of spirituality, the Russian culture is the most integrated and profoundest in the world. These features were accumulated in the Russian idea of spirituality: national unity, humanism, and non-violence. This culture is so highly moral and mystical that it is even a mystery to the Russians themselves, who are historically accustomed to learn intellect-reason from the West, without realizing that a combination of mind and heart is more important than a heartless mind that is capable of creating much grief in the world. <sup>6</sup>

## Eurasian Paradigm of the Kazakh Culture

The sociocultural concept of "Eurasianism" is a popular idea in the independent Republic of Kazakhstan. It unites the cultural and social processes going on in the country; several dissertations have been defended on this topic (by E. Saudanbekova, R. Abrakhmanova, N. Arshabekov, N. Kurmanbaeva, and so on).

Prominent representatives of Russian emigration have been animatedly discussing the Eurasian type of culture since the 1920s. In so doing, they saw Russia's midway position between Europe and Asia as a determining factor in its spirituality. Nikolai Trubetskoi even wrote about the Turanic element present in the Russian culture and Eurasian nationalism.

<sup>6</sup> See: M. Pak, G. Yugai, "Novoevraziiskaia kontseptsia rossiiskoi tsivilizatsii (filosofsky aspekt)," *MGU Bulletin*, Series 7 (Philosophy), No. 5, 1993, pp. 9-17.

We will take a closer look at the Eurasian idea in the context of Kazakhstan's sociocultural problems below. But in the meantime, let us return to examining the sociocultural potential of the Eurasian idea in the development of the culturological pursuits in Russia.

Several sociopolitical foundations can be identified in the idea of "Eurasianism."

This idea arose as an understanding of the difference between Russia and Europe, and in the broader respect, the difference between the Orthodox civilization and the Western-Christian. In Western thinking, Russia is frequently not related to Europe; its borders do not end at the Ural Mountains, but somewhere in the region of Carpathian Mountains. For example, Friedrich Nietzsche claimed that "post-Peter" Russia is a huge midway kingdom where Europe seems to return to Asia. This opinion has a sound basis: Europe and Asia comprise a single continent, while Russia is its heartland (center).

From this viewpoint, Eurasia stands before us as a special cultural world headed by Russia, internally and strongly whole in the endless and, evidently, frequently contradictory diversity of its manifestations. Eurasia-Russia is a developing unique cultural personality. Like other cultural wholes, it, by individualizing humankind, is performing a so-called historical mission.

In this sense, Russia is a special world. The principal and most important aspects of the destinies of this world proceed separately from the destinies of countries located to the west (Europe) and to the south and east of it (Asia). This special world should be called Eurasia. The nations and people living within the boundaries of this world are capable of achieving a degree of mutual understanding and practices of fraternal coexistence that are almost impossible in Europe and Asia.

Nikolai Trubetskoi, Pyotr Savitsky, and Lev Gumilev, who are the main supporters of the sociocultural Eurasian idea, reduce its main provisions to the following theses:

—Such extremities as nationalism and cosmopolitanism should be overcome. According to the principle of cosmopolitanism put forward by Nikolai Trubetskoi, civilization is the higher good for the sake of which national features must be sacrificed. Culture put forward under the guise of universal civilization is in fact the culture of only a certain ethnic group of Roman and German peoples. The cultural condition of the Europeanized nation is in less advantageous circumstances than the wellbeing of the natural European. Europeanization breaks down the ethnic unity of a nation that is constantly subjected to marginalization; "in a nation that borrows someone else's culture, the generation gap will also be greater than in nations with a homogenous national culture." Acculturation leads to the elite culture breaking away from the folk culture.

As for "Westernization," it primarily affects the upper social echelons and city residents. As a result, a "cultured" ("civilized") people is first deprived of its economic and then of its political independence and becomes ethnographical material (the current situation in the CIS countries can serve as a case in point).

—The future of Russian culture is seen in neo-Eurasianism. It is a flexible synthesis of Russian and many other cultures existing both in Russia itself and within the CIS; whereby we are in no way talking here about an attempt to reanimate the Soviet Union.

Lev Gumilev wrote: "This continent (Eurasia) has united three times over a historically short period. First it was united by the Turks, who created a khaganate that covered the land from the Yellow to the Black seas. The Mongols from Siberia came to replace the Turks; after complete collapse and disintegration, Russia took the initiative upon itself. Since the 15th century, Russians have been moving eastward and arrived at the Pacific Ocean." According to Lev Gumilev, the new nation thus acted as the "heir of the Turkic khaganate and the Mongol ulus."<sup>7</sup>

Lev Gumilev gives Russian cultural experts something to think about when he says: "It is time to stop looking at the ancient peoples of Siberia and Central Asia only as the neighbors of China or

<sup>7</sup> L. Gumilev, "Iz istorii Evrazii," *Evrasiia*, No. 1, 2001, p. 5.

Iran.” Catholic Europe, China, and the Muslim world have been traditionally against the unification of Eurasia (as Russian culture sees it).

Georgy Vernadsky justifies the Eurasian idea from the viewpoint of the noosphere concept; he believes that there are no natural borders between European and Asian Russia; “consequently, there are not two Russias—European and Asian. There is only one Russia—Eurasian, or Russia-Eurasia.”<sup>8</sup>

The Eurasian idea is widely discussed in the contemporary philosophical and other literature of the CIS countries; the participants in the discussions occupy different positions on this issue.

For example, nationalistically oriented figures think the idea of unity of the cultures of the “metropolis” and “foreigners,” which they use to describe the Turkic-Caucasian people, to be humiliating for the Russian people (mention can be made in this context of the articles by Natalia Guseva published in the journal *Russky vestnik*). The nationalistic establishment also had a negative response to the books by O. Suleimenov “Az i Ya” (A to Z) and A. Murat “Polyn polovetskovo polia” (Sage of Polovets Field). It should be noted that non-acceptance of the Eurasian idea frequently takes cover behind the so-called pan-Islamicist and pan-Turkic threat.

Before delving deeper into the fundamentals of the Eurasian idea, let’s take a look at the theory that forms the very popular foundation of Samuel Huntington’s theory on the clash of civilizations. According to this teaching, the border areas of different civilizations are likely hotbeds of instability and conflicts.

Meanwhile, the example of Kazakhstan, the geocultural space of which is located between the Confucian and Orthodox civilizations, points to the contrary; public *consent* has been achieved in the country, and the sociopolitical stability that exists here is quite strong (which cannot be said about certain CIS states). Many factors, a significant one being culture, can explain this influence. In our opinion, the bearers of the Eurasian mentality are having a great influence on the internal situation in present-day Kazakhstan.

A large group of Slavs lives in Kazakhstan (according to the latest data they comprise 23-26% of the total size of the republic’s population); nor should we forget that the Kazakh people were long under Russian power. As a result of the cultural structure of the Kazakh people, some changes occurred that primarily affected the language. In this respect, the problem of Russian-speaking Kazakhs (Uighurs, Uzbeks, Tatars, and so on) emerged.

There can be no doubt that demographic and linguistic factors are having a huge influence on the ethnic culture. But no group of the population (particularly a large one) can be barred from the national culture because it has lost its language. For example, the Scottish and Irish did not lose their national mentality just because they began speaking English. As for Kazakhstan, Russian-speaking Kazakhs and the representatives of several other Muslim peoples have not lost their national traditions and customs. What is more, we are not talking about a specific amount or percentage.

We can convince ourselves that there are three origins in the cultural system of the Kazakh people of the beginning of the 21st century: the traditional culture, colonial Russian culture, and the influence of the West.

The Eurasian cultural type has been able to combine the traditional culture with the achievements of the Western civilization. Specialized studies show that the Kazakhs tend toward a cultural dialog; Abai also had much to say about this at one time. But to regard the “traditionalist” as an adversary of progress, and a “modernized individual” as his antipode, would be rather contrived. In this respect, it is very appropriate to present the words of Nursultan Nazarbaev: “We have significantly broken away from our cultural roots. However, we have been subjected to the influence of other civilizations more. Whether this is good or bad is an entirely different matter.”<sup>9</sup>

There are many similar examples in world history. For example, finding them in a state of dependency, the Jews were left with two alternatives—either to carry out the irreconcilable zealot tac-

<sup>8</sup> Quoted from: L. Gumilev, *V poiskakh vymyshlennogo tsarstva*, Almaty, 1992, p. 9.

<sup>9</sup> N. Nazarbaev, *V potoke istorii*, Oner, Almaty, 1996, p. 264 (in Kazakh).

tics of complete denial of the ancient Roman culture or to fight the enemy with its own weapon, outsmart its every step, and prepare countermeasures. The tactics chosen by these people led to victory; evidence of this is the contemporary Jewish culture.<sup>10</sup>

Similar phenomena also occurred when Russia, Japan, and China encountered Western expansion. We know that in a certain historical period these countries fell behind the West in level of technological development. After Peter the Great’s reforms, Russia came closer to the West European culture. The Old Believers and Slavophiles were against Peter’s reforms; their views can be evaluated as manifestations of zealot archaism in Russia.

Japan and China responded to the West’s pressure a little differently. After they raised the level of their material culture by applying the advanced achievements of the West, Japan and China raised obstacles to European spiritual expansion. Japan acted more comprehensively in this matter; as a result it became a country with one of the most advanced cultures of the world.

This evokes very different responses to European expansion. It can be considered that, despite the irretrievable losses, the Kazakh people honorably passed this historical test. But it would not be correct to underplay the role of the Eurasian subtype in the Kazakh culture.

The Eurasian cultural type, which in Hegel’s words belongs to the “disrupted consciousness,” fluctuates between the West and the East; an example of this tradition is related to the Great Silk Road.

But it would be one-sided to regard the Eurasian culture only as a buffer between the West and the East. In this case, the matter concerns not simply relations between two super civilizations, but about the formation of some single model: an event occurred in the very center of Asia that was of paramount importance for the human culture.

There can be no doubt that, like the medieval Renaissance (which occurred as a result of the merging of the Hellenic, Arab, Persian, and Turkic cultures), in the 21st century, a new cultural upswing is beginning in Central Asia (CA). This requires the irrevocable will of the nation, its unity, common traditions, and sensitive response to the changes of the times.

In order to define the mentality of the Eurasian cultural type, we will try to present the special features of the Eastern, Western, and Kazakh world outlooks in the table below.

Eastern Type	Western Type	Kazakh Type
Microcosm	Macrocasm	Bright World
Virtuality	Rationality	Humaneness
Introsuject	Subject-object	Subject-subject
Integrated world	Changeable world	Humanized world
Psychology	Technology	Environment
Mystics	Science	Ethics
Closed society	Open society	Society of dialog
Self-cognition	Cognition of nature	Personal formation
Religion	Philosophy	Traditions
Fate	Active Involvement	Interrelationships
Idealism	Materialism	Syncretism
Poetry	Prose	Epos
Farming	Urbanism	Community

<sup>10</sup> See: A. Toynbee, *A Study of History*, Oxford University Press, 1934-1961.

Of course, it would be a mistake to look for these typical features in the same form in empirics. The ideal type is formed not by summarizing the empirical manifestation of one specific subject field, but by raising what is significant in this sphere to the rank of the ideal.

Another aspect should also be kept in mind: we presented the table in order to show the possible potential of the Eurasian cultural type. Turning this possibility into reality, however, is a dialectical process.

In Kazakh conditions, the representatives of the Eurasian-Kazakh type and the Russian-speaking culture have much in common. No matter how negative the attitude toward the Soviet Union was, we must admit that the slogan Friendship of the Peoples had a very true ring to it; it became a psychological characteristic of the ordinary people. It was for this very reason that in March 1991 most of the population of Kazakhstan voted for preserving the Soviet Union, which in no way means that the people were against the country acquiring its independence. Nothing can stop representatives of the European nationality with their Eurasian mentality, who feel themselves to be full-fledged citizens of Kazakhstan, from engaging in productive activity for the good of their republic, which is striving to find its place among the civilized countries.

So, we have taken a look at several problems of the Eurasian cultural type. In order to realize its possibilities, it must join together with the Kazakh traditional culture. Otherwise marginal signs will predominate in the Eurasian Kazakh culture.

## Conclusion

National ideology and social identification are fundamental factors of political stability in the CA countries. It seems that one of the main threats to the region's countries, including the southern regions of Kazakhstan, is hidden in the current social and ideological development of the Central Asian societies; this is expressed in several aspects.

First, it must be noted that right up until the present, *essentially all the Central Asian societies have been developing in conditions of a certain ideological vacuum*. Unfortunately, in most CA countries, the state has still not been unable to offer any serious foundations on which to foster social identification. Due to the underdevelopment of the so-called nation-states and civil society, there are no ready ideological models; in most countries the traditional ideologemes have either been eroded or have still not undergone the proper modification to be perceived in this capacity. It stands to reason that something must be found to fill the ideological vacuum existing in the region's countries; a solution to this situation has not been found, while no development scenarios or ideological concepts as such have been offered either.

Development of the ideologies of the nation-states and civil society could accelerate the formation of national ideology and identity in the CA countries, but they are still underdeveloped or do not exist at all. There are only two alternative ideas in the Central Asian societies—the Islamic doctrine and ethnicity, whereby the protest against the government's policy could accelerate their final formation.

Along with the religious idea, *a determining factor* in the current social and ideological development of the Central Asian countries *continues to be the ethnic component*. It is undergoing rapid development, primarily in those states of the region where essentially half of the country's population consisted of representatives of the so-called non-indigenous peoples right up until the Soviet Union collapsed. For this reason, at the beginning of the 1990s, representatives of the indigenous population in these countries quickly rallied around the idea of independence and revival of ethnic self-awareness, culture, and language.

This process is still going on today, when the social and ideological development of the Central Asian societies is unfolding against the background of immature nation-states.

The thing is that nation-states with an integrated ethnic foundation have not appeared in the region until recently. The formation of nation-states essentially began in Soviet times, whereby it was manifested to the greatest extent only in Kazakhstan; in other regions of the country the situation is much worse. Nevertheless, the Central Asian countries are actively searching for their own identity today, primarily putting the emphasis on historical traditions and centuries-old folk heritage.

In order to resolve all the aforementioned problems in a successful and timely way, the CA countries need to accelerate the delayed process of replacing the paradigm of their civilizational development and shift as quickly as possible from sovereignty to implementing their own model of modernization. In so doing, carrying out market reforms, democratization of the system of power relations, and building a civil society and nation-state should not be an end in themselves, but only ways or means for creating this model.

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