

A.A. Uskembayeva

*Ye.A. Buketov Karaganda State University, Kazakhstan
(E-mail: uskembayeva0901@gmail.com)*

Formation of national identity in Central Asia

In the article the phenomenon of national identity as a multidimensional process of the formation of a person and a nation, which can be revealed through various aspects is discussed. The author's position on the problem of modern interpretation of the concepts of «identity» and «national identity» is presented. The paper reveals the specifics of the formation of national identity in the countries of Central Asia. Central Asia, one of the most understudied areas in the world, is currently going through the upheavals of modernisation and nation formation. Arguing against the one-dimensional modernist conclusion that this process was arrested during the Soviet period, the article sets out to explore the complex weave of historical continuity and discontinuity in the formation of national identity in the new states. It argues against the notion that national identity involves the necessary dissolution of traditional ties. Based on the above, the author comes to the conclusion that national identity can be defined as a complex multidimensional, multifaceted phenomenon, the study of which includes social, socio-philosophical, psychological, culturological, properly ethnic aspects. Identity bears in itself the answer to the question about the essence of its people, nation, its place, role and tasks in world history and the ideal forms of its existence. Thus, national identity develops in the process of historical change, characterizing a certain level of growth of national self-consciousness.

Keywords: identity, national identity, culture, history, nation, Central Asia, Union, language, heritage, formation.

During the history of humanity, the identity issues have always played an important role in influencing the course of political and socio-economic processes. Models and approaches of the identity formation have been changed over time and each period of history has its own specific model of identity formation. People have always tended not to consider themselves from the perspective of a certain individual, but to create groups encouraging support to each other. One of such groups is a community of people who believe that they are united by their origin. The formation of this community, as a rule, is not a natural but a culturally-based process.

The cardinal social, political and economic changes occurring in the world in recent decades have led to the expansion of interconnections and interdependencies of various countries, peoples and cultures. Changes encompass almost all forms of social life and receive ambiguous, sometimes contradictory assessments in social science knowledge. This is due to the fact that the processes of globalization involve the formation of new forms and institutions intended to become regulators of social processes in the XXI century. Many theoretical and methodological problems arising in this context require a new rethinking.

Interest in this topic is due to a number of circumstances. The problem of identity gets a new understanding in the context of globalization with its contradictory trends. One of the main challenges to the human community in the 21st century is the opposition of universal civilizational standards, on the one hand, and the values of national-cultural identity, on another. Globalization is the strongest test for national and cultural identity. Identity in the global world becomes the main discourse of both science and everyday life, it appears as a kind of «prism through which many important features of modern life are considered, evaluated and studied» [1].

The concept of «identity» comes from the Latin root «idem», meaning «the same». In this primary sense, it was used by the thinkers of Antiquity and the Middle Ages. Identity meant the property of things to remain the same, to preserve its essence. Gradually, this term begins to denote the unity of things, and to designate a single human existence.

In the modern world, not a single social society can manage without identity, much less can the largest and most universal of them, the nation, remain without it.

National identity is the process of integrating various social (including intra-ethnic) groups and communities into a single national state. This is a cultural norm, reflecting the emotional reactions of individuals in relation to their nation and national political system [2]. The value of national identity has recently increased.

The national identity of any national community is determined by a variety of factors, including historical, political, cultural, linguistic, territorial, civilizational and others. The issue of identification and self-

identification of its representatives is complex and relevant in the development of society. Because it means how much a person identifies himself or not identifies with society.

Manifestations of national identity are feelings of belonging, inclusiveness, or, conversely, rejection. Two characteristics of national identity are distinguished — community and distinctiveness. The community reflects the internal dimension of national identity. Distinction shows how similar or different a nation is from other nations — members of the international community.

It is directly related to the problem of the integrity of society and the viability of the state. The integrity of society is possible due to the fact that people create an «imaginary community» (B. Anderson) [3] or «repertoire of identities» (E.G. Ericson) [4]. People are united by the «image of community»: ideas about a common territory, generations, history, cultural norms, and laws.

National interests and national identity are associated with the image of community, since the people in the common territory created common religious and secular values, a language of communication capable of becoming state. It helped to represent a unified and relatively homogeneous society, creating a nation-state.

National identity includes the following components:

- 1) social, or national-civil (identification with daily activities, language, culture, economy);
- 2) political or national-state (identification with the government, its institutions and symbols — the border, army, head of state, citizenship, anthem, flag, emblem). The strong divergence of such components of national identity leads to destabilization, a crisis of statehood, and threatens to split the nation. The selection of two components helps to characterize the structure and elements of national identity.

National identity can be interpreted as the final act of the process of awareness by an individual or social group of their belonging to a certain community as a result of their acceptance of the values, norms, ideals that guide this nation, as a result of an individual's mastery of the body of knowledge about the nation's historical path. According to the American researcher L. Greenfeld, «national identity in its purely modern understanding is an identity that consists of belonging to people», the most important feature of which is its recognition as a «nation». National identity is characterized by a specific combination of objective and subjective features that distinguish one national community from another. Here, the feeling of a common destiny, common experiences, collective memory, that is, everything that contributes to the formation of a collective «we», becomes essential [5].

In the modern world, not only political and financial elites become involved in intercultural communication, but also a wide variety of social strata, regardless of their position in the social hierarchy of society. Some perceive cultural diversity as a source of development and freedom, others — as a threat to a split in society.

The problem of national identity acquires special relevance in the conditions of social transformations.

Transitional societies, emerging as a result of the collapse of larger states, face a number of problems on the way to building national statehood. At first, newly formed countries often try to build their own statehood, rejecting previous experience of the previous political regime.

Secondly, in the context of globalization, the economic freedom of individuals and corporations results in the loss of one of the pillars of national statehood in the classical sense. This forces states to develop forms of interaction with the outside world.

Thirdly, ethnic heterogeneity is characteristic of most transition countries. The fact is that during the period of the region's existence as part of a larger state, internal migration processes — natural or provoked by the mobilization type of development, as in the USSR — make changes to its ethnic map. Thus, in the newly formed states there is an acute national issue — different ethnic groups are forced to coexist in conditions where the value of one of them is exaggerated in relation to another, which is why tensions between representatives of different ethnic communities grow. In order to build a politically and economically strong state, society needs to affirm common values for the entire population, which would become the basis for the whole society [6; 568, 569].

After the collapse of the USSR, five independent states were formed on the territory of the former Central Asian republics — the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Republic of Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and the Republic of Uzbekistan. For the new independent states one of the priorities was the formation of national identity, since the solution of this issue was directly related to their further development. The process of formation of national identity in the countries of the region began even before the collapse of the USSR, when laws «on language» were adopted in the Soviet republics of Central Asia and Kazakhstan. These documents opened the way for the elites of the Central Asian republics to approve subsequent decisions concerning the language of titular nations, especially since after the collapse of the USSR, language

policy played a key role in the formation of national identity in the countries of Central Asia. In all the countries of Central Asia, without exception, this issue has received increased attention. With the external similarity of the history of development, closeness of cultures and traditions in the formation of national identity, each of the Central Asian countries followed its own path, which was determined by the characteristics of the domestic political situation, as well as by the interests of the elites in power. Nevertheless, in all Central Asian countries, the preservation of continuity in the structure of society, the presence of traditions, culture, and national language, which did not disappear while they were part of a single state, contributed to the assertion of national identity.

The formation of national identity in the countries of Central Asia was greatly influenced by the heterogeneity of society, the preservation of regional differences. The elites in power in the Central Asian states needed to take into account the multidirectional interests of informal groups and clans, as well as the role of tribal relations, which predetermined a difficult, often contradictory path to the formation of national identity. Moreover, in the countries of the region, at the time of independence, a special governance mechanism was formed, when, along with party-state structures, regional-clan principles for resolving issues characteristic of the Central Asian republics for centuries were in place. Having accepted the communist ideology in words, the leadership of the republics of Central Asia has always taken into account the inter-clan balance of power.

Since the formation of independent states in Central Asia, their conceptual approaches to the definition of national identity at the political level have not been revised. The focus was on historical heritage, culture, traditions and national language, which acted as a key element in the formation of national identity.

In the centralized Soviet Union, all five republics were a kind of proto-state, and although their control over their own material and spiritual resources and attributes was still insufficient, they already had names, boundaries, legislation, administrative apparatus, political and cultural elite. By the time of the collapse of the USSR, the national identity of each of the republics was already clearly outlined and realized by the population. Therefore, it is hardly possible to talk about «revival» here, rather, it is necessary to talk about continuity, the continuation of the process of national construction, which took place back in the Soviet years [7; 217].

After achieving independence, these elites had to focus on such an aspect of identity as «national construction», this meant striving to ensure that the entire ethnic group of the new state, and not just the so-called «titular ethnic group», whose ethnonym gave the name to the whole republic, turned political loyalty to the new state. Over the past two decades, each of the Central Asian states has given the titular nation not only symbolic, but also political and professional preference, continuing the policy of «indigenization» developed by the Soviet regime and reached its heyday in the Central Asian republics in the Brezhnev era. In these republics, the Soviet distinction between citizenship and nationality is strictly preserved. The leaders, in the period of formation, tried to restore the still pre-Soviet, «genuine» identity by means of officially approved new national symbols on flags and emblems [8].

In Central Asia, the formation of a national state is based on three main elements: it is a legal and political structure, myth-making at the level of national ideology and daily practice. National unity implies a certain internal coherence between these three interrelated levels: minimal consensus on what it is considered a political norm, general ideas about national identity and history, and daily practice, within the framework of which citizens adapt the national meta-narrative to their personal realities [9; 14].

Despite the considerable period of time that has passed since independence, the problem of identity formation continues to be relevant for the countries of Central Asia.

For centuries, Central Asia has been linked by ethnic, cultural, economic ties, and from time to time has been united politically. For the Central Asian (Turkestan) intelligentsia of the early 20th century, the historical and cultural unity of the region was obvious. However, during the period of delimitation and after it, most of the efforts of the intelligentsia were channeled to the nation building in the framework of the Soviet state, which took place through the separation in principle of the indivisible historical and cultural heritage. The reason that national construction took place by emphasizing, and at times artificially finding differences, lies precisely in the historical, ethnic and cultural proximity of the peoples of Central Asia.

National identity is a complex multidimensional, multifaceted phenomenon, the study of which combines social, socio-philosophical, psychological, cultural, and ethnic aspects proper. National identity can be defined as the main idea, given by the national image of the world and national history, society of which lives in this historical epoch. Identity carries the answer to the question about the essence of the nation, its place, role and tasks in world history. As a social phenomenon, it is characterized by a lot of quality and dynamism:

– the identity of the era of globalization is a matter of choice, characterized by flexibility, mobility, multiplicity, incompleteness. At the same time, this «choice» is not entirely free, for it is carried out in a specific social context, where not only the range of alternatives, but also a set of different social practices is given;

– both groups and individuals have identity. It should be said that they have multiple identities (territorial, national, cultural, etc.), certain aspects of which mutually complement each other. It seems that the choice of identities should lead not to their «clash», and not to a «clash of civilizations», but to recognition of the cultural diversity of our global and interdependent world, where people and nations should feel themselves not only a part of their local societies, but also of humanity. A form of global and local interaction is more coexistence than collision. Consideration of this factor is extremely important for understanding current global processes.

National identity is based on the «I am the Other» attitude, on the recognition of the «Other», and in this respect it is especially consonant with the current situation of cultural diversity. At the same time, we note that in the modern, dynamically changing world there is a shift and erasure of the faces that once divided «their own» from «alien». The «we» category takes on a wider meaning. Characteristics that once seemed «alien» become more familiar. Awareness of the diversity of cultures, identities, not as a threat, but as the reality of the world should serve as «overcoming barriers» in the name of a dialogue among civilizations.

Thus, national identity is the most intensively used category in the analysis of social interaction, social communication. This concept at the end of the twentieth century finally entrenched in the social-philosophical discourse. National identity is associated with the concepts of identity, continuity, sustainability, identification and awareness of their belonging to a certain community and is characterized by qualitative certainty. Its essence goes beyond the individual and concerns the very identity of the social system.

Just as their nomadic ancestors were able to syncretise Islam with shamanistic practices, so it is possible that contemporary Central Asians will be able to retain a layered sense of national identity in conjunction with traditional identities. Conversely, it is doubtful that further industrialisation will simply dilute traditional identities — the qualitative shift that enabled national subjectivities to emerge has already been made. And they will feel forced to do so because the layering of identity is a lived reality right down to the level of the face-to-face rather than simply action based on their own invented traditions.

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А.А. Ускембаева

Орталық Азиядағы ұлттық бірегейліктің қалыптасуы

Мақалада әртүрлі аспектілер арқылы анықталатын тұлға мен ұлттың қалыптасуының ұлттық бірегейлік феномені көпөлшемді үрдіс ретінде қарастырылды. «Бірегейлік» және «ұлттық бірегейлік» ұғымдарын заманауи түсіндіру мәселесі бойынша автор өз тұжырымдамаларын

ұсынған. Мақалада Орталық Азия мемлекеттерінде ұлттық бірегейліктің қалыптасуының ерекшеліктері көрсетілген. Әлемдегі аз зерттелген аймақтардың бірі — Орталық Азия қазіргі уақытта модернизация мен ұлттық бірегейлікті қалыптастырудың төңірегінде. Кеңестік кезеңде бұл үдеріс тоқтатылған деген модернистік тұжырымға қарама-қайшы бұл мақалада жаңа мемлекеттердің біртұтастығы мен ұлттық бірегейлігін қалыптастырудағы тарихи сабақтастықтың күрделі өзара әрекеттестігі зерттелді. Мақала авторы ұлттық бірегейлік әлеуметтік, философиялық, психологиялық, мәдени және этникалық аспектілерді қамтитын кешенді көпөлшемді, көпқырлы құбылыс ретінде анықталуы мүмкін деген қорытындыға келді. Ұлттық бірегейлік көптеген сыртқы факторларға байланысты сырттай өзгергенімен, заманға сай бейімделгіштік қасиетін көрсете отырып, өз ядросын немесе түпкі тамырын өзгеріссіз қалдыра алады. Сол арқылы өзіндік ықпал да етеді. Бұл жағдайда бірегейлік қорғағыштық қызмет атқарады. Заманның қойған талабына сай ұлттың бейімделуін жеңілдететін де осы бірегейліктің қасиеті.

Кілт сөздер: бірегейлік, ұлттық бірегейлік, мәдениет, тарих, ұлт, Орталық Азия, бірлестік, тіл, мұра, қалыптасу.

A.A. Uskembayeva

Формирование национальной идентичности в Центральной Азии

В статье рассмотрены вопросы феномена национальной идентичности как многомерного процесса становления личности и нации, который может быть раскрыт с помощью различных аспектов. Изложена авторская позиция по проблеме современной интерпретации концептов «идентичность» и «национальная идентичность». В работе раскрыта специфика формирования национальной идентичности в странах Центральной Азии. Центральная Азия, одна из самых малоизученных областей в мире, в настоящее время переживает потрясения модернизации и формирования нации. В противовес одномерному модернистскому заключению о том, что этот процесс был остановлен в советский период, в статье ставится задача исследовать сложное переплетение исторической преемственности и развития в формировании национальной идентичности в новых государствах. Исходя из сказанного, автор приходит к мнению, что национальную идентичность можно определить как сложный многомерный, многогранный феномен, исследование которого включает социальные, социально-философские, психологические, культурологические, собственно этнические аспекты. Идентичность несет в себе ответ на вопрос о сущности своего народа, нации, ее месте, роли и задачах в мировой истории и идеальных формах ее существования. Таким образом, национальная идентичность развивается в процессе исторических перемен, характеризуя определенную степень роста национального самосознания.

Ключевые слова: идентичность, национальная идентичность, культура, история, нация, Центральная Азия, объединение, язык, наследие, образование.

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