Ye.R. Amangosov[1] *, N.S. Pusyrmanov[1] , T.Zh. Zhakiyanov[2] , G.B. Orazbekova[3]

[1]*Institute of State History MSHE RK, Astana, Kazakhstan;*
[2]*Academy of Public Administration under the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Astana, Kazakhstan;*
[3]*Karaganda Buketov University, Karaganda, Kazakhstan*
(E-mail: eramangosov@yandex.kz; nurbekp89@gmail.com; t.zhakiyanov@apa.kz; gulnurbk90@gmail.com)

Developing the Institution of the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan in the Context of Forming a Fair Kazakhstan

This paper examines the evolutionary development of the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan (APK), an important structural component of the country's political system and an institution that promotes inter-ethnic harmony. The analysis is based on program documents that reveal the different stages of development and provide insights into its transformation. The article is based on institutional design and theoretical developments by B. Jessop and E. Yesengarayev. It provides an understanding of the role of the APK in harmonising inter-ethnic relations. The paper emphasises the social and legal interdependence required to adapt to dynamic socio-demographic conditions. The article considers the development of the APK in the context of the formation and assembly of the nation of Kazakhstan following the collapse of the USSR. It offers a new perspective on the evolutionary path of the APK and its implications for strengthening social cohesion in Kazakhstan. The authors emphasise the institution's ability to navigate complex inter-ethnic dynamics. This study contributes to the existing literature by offering novel insights into the evolutionary journey of the APK and its implications for fostering social cohesion in Kazakhstan.

Keywords: Political institution, interethnic relations, institutional design, Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan, Fair Kazakhstan, Development, Evolution, Nation-building, ethnic groups, national unity.

Introduction.
What is the path of the institution of the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan:
Volksnation or Staatsnation?

The political transition and the ensuing political transformation mirror the reflection of political choices in the conditions of the formation of a sovereign state as the Republic of Kazakhstan. The historical legacy of the Soviet state as a "laboratory of friendship between peoples" determined the process of nation-building of the young post-Soviet state, as well as the harmonization of inter-ethnic relations of the multi-ethnic community. At the same time, the state model of regulating inter-ethnic relations in Kazakhstan was institutionalized in the form of a (non)political body, the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan.

On the other hand, a new stage of nation-building under the conditions of a new social contract (*Constitutional Reform 2022*) in Kazakhstan was formulated at this stage by implementing the concept of "Fair Kazakhstan" and "Responsible Citizen" (*Adal azamat*). The President of the country in his speech at the second meeting of the National Kurultai "Fair Kazakhstan — Responsible Citizen" noted that, "Building a Fair Kazakhstan is an undertaking for the whole society… It is not sufficient to simply carry out political and economic reforms to achieve this goal. It is essential that our individual and social values and patterns of behavior are modernized, that our nation's world view is changed" [1]. Thus, the political framework of the development of the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan provides an opportunity to characterize its evolution, especially within the framework of theoretical approaches.

The modern state theorist B. Jessop notes the tendency to endow the people (population) with a corporate character, "formed as *unum e pluribus*", indicating its position as a source of political power for the state [2; 285]. At the same time, he distinguishes three forms of national statehood and national identity:

1) Ethnic nation (*Volksnation*), based on a socially constructed and shared — real or fictitious — ethnic identity, for which membership of the community is based on *blood ties* or *naturalisation*;

2) Cultural nation (*Kulturnation*), based on a common national culture, which may well be defined and actively supported by the state itself. In this construct, membership of the community may be through *assimilation* or *acculturation*.

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* Corresponding author's e-mail address: *eramangosov@yandex.kz*

3) State or civic nation (*Staatsnation*), based on *loyalty* to and identification with the constitution and political institutions of the state [2; 295].

This division of nations and states for analytical purposes can, as practice shows, either alternate or reinforce each other. Kazakhstan, with its multi-ethnic community and the partial dominance of the Kazakh ethnos (70.4 %), according to the results of the 2021 census [3], builds its approaches within this framework. In this context, Grofman and Stockwell's proposed institutional designs to foster stable democracy in pluralistic societies envisage roles for institutions that are either mass/elitist oriented, reinforce the importance of ethnicity, or minimize it altogether [4; 7]. The former is characterised by special rights for group (*communal*) interests, including separate school systems, ethnically based rules for job distribution, etc., based on the norm of proportional representation. The second design is served by *inclusive* institutions in which the legal system strongly emphasises individual rather than group rights, with the requirement of a single common language or multilingualism for all citizens.

Israeli author E. Alexander, who deals with the definition and description of institutional design and considers its implementation, notes that institutional design arises whenever institutions are "created and changed as a result of human activity, either through *evolutionary processes* of mutual adaptation or through a purposeful decision-making process" [5; 213].

Kazakhstani sociologist E. Esengaraev, developing the concept of "*sociocultural cognitions*", distinguishes a *polycentric (modern)* macrotype of society, which, unlike the hierarchical (traditional) one, is characterised by the pluralistic nature of relations between institutions and the absence of a dominant centre [6; 23], while the traditional one is characterised by the dominance of two institutions ─ power and religion ("in the modern period in social systems of this type, religion in some cases is replaced by ideology"). At the same time, he notes that *arbitrary* and *purposive rational influence* on the structure and content of sociocultural cognitions is *impossible* [6; 28].

Various authors in defining the role of the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan applied various assessments, such as "*know-how of* Kazakhstan's *interethnic policy*" [7], "institution of *nationwide unity*" [8], "institute of *peace* and *harmony*" [9], etc. It is worth noting that Tugzhanov and others specifically note that the very creation of this body raised national policy to the level of institutionalization [10; 93], thus considering the institutional design of the structure.

Methods

As a methodological framework, various general scientific methods were used, combined with the use of methods from disciplines related to political science, primarily historical, comparative, structural and functional methods. In particular, they were used to study the stages of evolution of the APK's status in historical retrospective.

The theoretical foundations are primarily Jessop's methodological approaches to nation-state relations, E. Esengaraev's work on "socio-cultural cognitions", and institutional design in relation to political and social institutions.

Some aspects of the activity of the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan as an instrument aimed at harmonizing inter-ethnic relations in society, in relation to changes in its constitutional-legal status, allowing to increase the level of conformity of this structure to the changing situation in society, and, in general, to the needs of society, are considered.

Results and Discussion

The difficulties faced by the political leadership of the young state were accompanied by the fact that it was the only one of the post-Soviet states that did not have a numerical advantage of the state-forming ethnic group [14; 2]. On the other hand, the threat of conflicts based on ethnicity, which was aggravated by the country's difficult economic situation, was a serious concern [11; 98]. At this stage, it is possible to distinguish a *yet institutionalized approach* to decisions on the issues of the country's national policy, which often reflected the inertia of the "Soviet past". In these conditions, representatives of Germans and Koreans moved organizational structure as an Association, in the case of Germans of public associations of Germans of Kazakhstan "Vozrozhdenie" (Revival) (1992), and Koreans ─ Association of Koreans of Kazakhstan (1990) [12; 168].

The political crisis that began after the elections in March 1994 forced the political leadership to search for a new mandate of trust and legitimization of political power. This was the logic of the creation of the Assembly of the People(s) of Kazakhstan in the initial version [10; 94], which synchronizes with the thoughts

of B. Jessop. It is not by chance that at the first session of the Assembly of the Peoples of Kazakhstan the proposal to hold a national referendum to extend the powers of President Nazarbayev until 2000 was adopted [16; 175]. Thus, the institutional design of the creation of a consultative body responsible for the harmonization of interethnic relations mainly coincided with the attempt to preserve and strengthen the political status quo.

The further stage of the APK's development is associated with active lawmaking in the sphere of interethnic relations in the late 1990s and early 2000s. This was accompanied by the strengthening of the role of the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan in the socio-political processes taking place in the republic. First, at this stage the formation of a unified Kazakh nation based on the primacy of civil identity continued. At the seventh session of the APK in December 2000, the President set the task of forming a civil community based on Kazakhstani patriotism.

This task became one of the key directions of the APK Strategy, adopted following the results of the IX session of the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan in 2000. The main goal of the APK Strategy was declared to increase the role of the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan in realisation of the tasks of the strategy "Kazakhstan-2030", strengthening of stability and harmony in the society and the process of formation of the Kazakhstani people, its strong statehood, open civil society.

In general, since the mid-2000s, a gradual process of evolution of the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan, an advisory and consultative body under the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, into a body with broad powers and responsibility enshrined in the Constitution has begun. One of the most important moments in the sphere of inter-ethnic integration and inter-confessional relations was the stage of creation of a treaty and legal framework in 2008–2011. In 2007, the assembly took a central role as the formal institution through which the doctrinal statements presenting the state's imagined version of a collective Kazakhstani identity deliberately and overtly decoupled from ethno-nationally derived identities [14]. It is worth noting that among English-speaking researchers, the process of nation-building through the transformation of the Assembly of People of Kazakhstan is interpreted within the framework of the policy of "Korenization" by Stalin [13], or by the "Soviet people" of Brezhnev [20].

Since 2008, the interests of ethnic groups have been safeguarded through parliamentary guaranteed representation of the Assembly in the Parliament of the Republic of Kazakhstan. This measure allowed Kazakhstan to implement the basic principle of paragraph 31 of the Document of the Copenhagen Meeting of the CSCE Conference on the Human Dimension, signed in June 1990, as well as the Lund Recommendations of September 1999 on special measures to ensure ethnic representation in government bodies.

In May 2010, an important step was taken towards the establishment of a united Kazakh nation as a civil community — the adoption of the Doctrine of National Unity, "based on the desire to create equal opportunities and stable living conditions for all citizens of Kazakhstan, recognition of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, awareness of responsibility for the fate of the nation, the creation and strengthening of national statehood on the ancestral Kazakh land and other fundamental principles enshrined in the Declaration of State Sovereignty, the Constitutional Law.

In 2010, the Doctrine of National Unity was adopted — not a legislative or Charter, but a document of the highest level, reflecting the demands of virtually all citizens of the country. The core of the Doctrine of National Unity is that the main value of Kazakhstan is its independence, created on the ancestral Kazakh land.

The constitutional status of the Assembly has also been changed, reflecting the transformation of the content and functions of this body, which, while positioning itself as a deliberative body, has other important inter-ethnic harmony additional tasks, such as fixing ethnic groups on the primacy of "civil nation" ("Kazakhstani") and increasing the level of trust between representatives of different ethnic groups, promoting their effective integration into Kazakhstani society. Therefore, studying and analyzing this state is important for understanding the direction in which the APK is transforming and what this means for the domestic model of interethnic interaction.

If earlier, it would seem, moments of consolidation of ethnic groups around the constructed vertical of power were of particular importance, now the problems (or opportunities, depending on the chosen point of view) of effective integration of ethnic groups into Kazakhstani society, considering the existing demographic trends and proportions, come to the fore. In this aspect, it is possible to predict further evolution of the constitutional and legal status of the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan, reflecting the role of this structure in the sphere of interethnic relations in the next five years, up to 2025.

At the same time, the establishment of the Assembly of Peoples of Kazakhstan became a fact, which determined the creation of ethno-cultural associations (formerly known as national cultural centres), including those of smaller ethnic groups, as a means of both representing the interests of ethnic groups and cultural autonomy. In 1996 there were 352 such organisations in the republic, representing 34 ethnic groups [11; 109], and expansion was a matter of "time and financial support". According to the Register of Ethno-Cultural Associations [17], there are currently 442 different ethno-cultural associations representing the interests of more than 40 ethnic groups.

The internal interests of ethnic groups are represented by the annually rotating deputy chairpersons of the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan, who are appointed on the recommendation of the APK Council and from the structures of ethno-cultural associations, such as the widely represented Russians, Germans, Uzbeks and Uighurs, as well as the Finnish minority. Meanwhile, in 2018 and 2020, representatives of the ethnic majority, the Kazakhs, from business [18] and the media [19] have been appointed. Meanwhile, the Constitutional reform of 2022 changed the configuration of the parliamentary representation of the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan in the Senate of the Parliament of the Republic of Kazakhstan, thereby eliminating the double direct vote of citizens of the country in the Parliament of the Republic of Kazakhstan. In the current composition of the deputy corps of the Assembly of People of Kazakhstan, the presence of experience and background in the structures of ethnic and cultural associations remains.

Conclusions

Deepening political changes in society and giving impetus to the development of democracy require guaranteeing the free development of the rights and freedoms of every citizen, including ethno-cultural needs. These requirements have been the main pillar of ethnopolitics since the first years of independent development of Kazakhstan and are being qualitatively improved. The evolution and transformation of State ethnopolitics is directly related to the pace of development of the Assembly of people of Kazakhstan, which is being implemented in the direction of strengthening civic identity in the context of political, economic and socio-cultural modernization over the years of independence.

Evolutionary transition of the instrument of legitimation of political power into a broadly represented and nationally oriented one based on civic identity. At the same time, we consider the study within the framework of institutional design, including the theoretical approaches of E. Ostrom (Institutional Analysis and Development framework (IAD)) as promising, including the overall effort to form civic identity.

Acknowledgments

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Е.Р. Аманғосов, Н.С. Пұсырманов, Т.Ж. Жакиянов, Г.Б. Оразбекова

Әділетті Қазақстан қалыптастыру контексіндегі Қазақстан халқы Ассамблеясы институтының дамуы

Мақалада еліміздің саяси жүйесінің маңызды құрылымдық құрамдас бөлігі және ұлтаралық келісімді қамтамасыз ететін институт — Қазақстан халқы Ассамблеясының (ҚХА) эволюциялық дамуы қарастырылған. Талдау дамудың әртүрлі кезеңдерін ашатын және оның трансформациясы туралы түсінік беретін бағдарламалық құжаттарға негізделген. Сонымен қатар институционалдық дизайн және Б. Джессоп пен Е. Есенғараевтың теориялық әзірлемелеріне сүйенген. Онда ұлтаралық қатынастарды үйлестірудегі ҚХА-ның рөлі туралы түсінік беріледі. Мақалада динамикалық әлеуметтік-демографиялық жағдайларға бейімделу үшін қажетті әлеуметтік және құқықтық өзара тәуелділікке баса назар аударылған. КСРО ыдырағаннан кейінгі Қазақстан ұлтының қалыптасуы мен дамуы тұрғысынан ҚХА-ның дамуы зерттелген. ҚХА-ның эволюциялық жолына және оның Қазақстандағы әлеуметтік бірлікті нығайту үшін салдарына жаңа көзқарас ұсынылған. Авторлар институттың күрделі этносаралық динаманы бағдарлау қабілетін атап көрсетеді. Бұл зерттеу ҚХА-ның эволюциялық жолына және оның Қазақстандағы әлеуметтік бірлікті нығайту үшін салдарына жаңа көзқарас ұсына отырып, қолданыстағы әдебиеттерге үлес қосады.

Кілт сөздер: саяси институт, этносаралық қатынастар, институционалдық дизайн, Қазақстан халқы Ассамблеясы, Әділетті Қазақстан, даму, эволюция, мемлекеттік құрылыс, этникалық топтар, ұлттық бірлік.

Е.Р. Амангосов, Н.С. Пусырманов, Т.Ж. Жакиянов, Г.Б. Оразбекова

Развитие института Ассамблеи народа Казахстана в контексте формирования Справедливого Казахстана

В статье рассмотрено эволюционное развитие Ассамблеи народа Казахстана (АНК) — важного структурного компонента политической системы страны и института, способствующего межэтническому согласию. Анализ основан на программных документах, которые раскрывают различные этапы развития и дают представление о его трансформации. Авторы статьи опираются на институциональный дизайн и теоретические разработки Б. Джессопа и Е. Есенгараева. В работе раскрыто понимание роли АНК в гармонизации межэтнических отношений, подчеркнута социальная и правовая взаимозависи-

мость, необходимая для адаптации к динамичным социально-демографическим условиям. Кроме того, рассмотрено развитие АНК в контексте формирования и становления казахстанской нации после распада СССР. В ней предложен новый взгляд на эволюционный путь АНК и его последствия для укрепления социальной сплоченности в Казахстане. Авторы подчеркивают способность института ориентироваться в сложной межэтнической динамике. Данное исследование вносит вклад в существующую литературу, предлагая новый взгляд на эволюционный путь АНК и его последствия для укрепления социальной сплоченности в Казахстане.

Ключевые слова: политический институт, межэтнические отношения, институциональный дизайн, Ассамблея народа Казахстана, Справедливый Казахстан, развитие, эволюция, государственное строительство, этнические группы, национальное единство.

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Information about the authors

Amangosov Yerkebulan — Master of social knowledge, Head of the scientific and information Department of Institute of state history of the Ministry of science and higher education of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Astana, Kazakhstan; https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9692-8684

Pusyrmanov Nurbek — PhD, director of the Institute of state history of the Ministry of science and higher education of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Astana, Kazakhstan; https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9905-0320

Zhakiyanov Talgat — Candidate of sociological sciences, National school of public policy, Academy of Public Administration under the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Astana, Kazakhstan; https://orcid.org/0009-0007-7900-2322

Orazbekova Gulnur — Master of humanities, senior lecturer at the Department of world history and international relations, Karaganda University of the name of academician E.A. Buketov, Karaganda, Kazakhstan; https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7617-3288