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KAZAKHSTAN AS A MODEL FOR REGULATING INTERETHNIC RELATIONS

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Abstract

This article studies the development of interethnic accord in Kazakhstan and describes the tools needed to harmonize interethnic relations. The implementation of democratic principles through the development of civil society is considered in the article as a main tool to regulate interethnic relations in the country. Political stability in Kazakhstan is studied as it is assumed to be directly related to the Kazakhstani model of interethnic accord.

Keywords: *Interethnic relations, civil society, Kazakhstan nation, political stability, consensus, social harmony, democracy;*

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1. Introduction

Today, there are more than 6 billion people living in the world; they all differ by their ethnic, cultural, linguistic, racial and religious affiliation. Approximately, 3-4 thousand nations exist worldwide [4]. Nations consist of various ethnic groups and nationalities; therefore, it is extremely important to maintain interethnic accord in multicultural countries.

After Kazakhstan gained its sovereignty, individual and collective (ethnic, religious and general civil) identity within the formation of civic patterns in a changing multiethnic society became one of the highly discussed issues, not least because Kazakhstan was a part of the Soviet Union, and the 'We are the Soviet people' concept had a profound effect on promoting the general civic (collective) identity which put an individual identity on the back burner and dissolved cultural differences and diversity within a 'melting pot'.

Based on issues of identity in the context of multiethnic society and ethnic diversity, Kazakhstan is now facing the transformation from a 'traditional society' into a civil society. Determination of political and cultural identities, which will be the basis for the future of the country, requires the correct assessment of identities and implementation of appropriate strategic solutions.

Democracy and Interethnic Relations

Civil peace and interethnic concordance are critical for the prosperity of the state at the present moment, particularly taking into account the current global economic crisis. Kazakhstan has developed its unique model of interethnic accord which has enabled the consistent implementation of its legal and institutional aspects.

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According to the president N. A. Nazarbayev, ‘Kazakhstan is continuing to carry out significant transformations aimed at increasing the efficiency of the political system and the governmental structure of the state [1].

Being the main driving power and the subject of the historical process, we are building a *civil* society which promotes citizens’ interests and their system of values. The extent to which individuals and society are protected from the pressure of government is defined by the degree of democracy. Therefore, all the processes in civil society are carried out in ‘upward’ rather than ‘downward’ direction, i.e. ‘the state and its competent bodies are formed from members of society and controlled by society as a whole through specific tools’ [2].

A highly developed civil society is the highest form of democracy; it is the firmness and stability of democracy.

So what is *democracy*? In his ‘On Democracy’, the famous political scientist Robert Dahl writes, ‘Democracy has been discussed off and on for about twenty-five hundred years, enough time to provide a tidy set of ideas about democracy on which everyone, or nearly everyone, could agree. For better or worse, that is not the case’ [3].

Lately, the term *social consensus democracy* is often used in the scientific vernacular. Social consensus democracy could be characterized by religious, linguistic, ethnic, ideological or racial integrity and the prevalence of horizontal segmentation during the institutionalization of interactions that happen within the elite level of this integrity and so on [5].

It is our belief that the specific and proper analyses of modern democratic systems were provided by R.Dahl and Ch.Lindblom. They pulled aside the abstract ideas of democracy and focused on the most important subject as ‘polyarchy’: what type of democratic systems should be in place in the contemporary world, to what extent is democracy developed in so-called modern democratic states [6].

However, Robert Dahl comes to the conclusion that ‘it is difficult to cover the most recent and authentic information’ [7].

With regard to the philosophy, the democracy is built on the ratio of ‘freedom and equality as social and political values’; these values are reflected in state institutions of democracy, in direct or representative democracy, correspondingly. The latter is now spread as a rule of law in law-governed states with the supreme power [8].

At the same time, it is essential to keep in mind the importance of the following: each generation discovers democracy in its own way because each historical period builds up its own peculiar system of material, social, political, and human values. Thereby, the conscious and adequate social structure comes into being during that particular period. Needless to say that each new generation is responsible for standards of civilization; this should not be ignored at any time.

The development of legal relations within each historical period means the formation and development of a civil society formed by the state with citizens having supreme social, economic, political, cultural and moral status – ‘this is the unlimited process of development which covers all the spheres of life including the aspirations of the society, power and the mankind for freedom, equality, justice, and other social, political, moral and cultural values [10].

Despite the unlimited nature of this development, there is still a basis for measuring the extent of this process – *this is the degree of democracy*, i.e. the degree of democracy within the power, the politics, and civic initiatives of individuals and collective groups.

Although we attempt to provide a comprehensive, yet brief review to define the nature of democracy and identify the main indicators of the civil society, it is first necessary to find out the followings: **firstly, we should define which form of democracy is being implemented in the course of the civil society development in Kazakhstan; secondly, we need to define and prove the main ways for the development of interethnic accord.**

As for the first issue, it is our belief that the civil society in Kazakhstan is being developed through social consensus democracy.

This is a base for determining the condition and the future of the civic identity in terms of multiethnic and multi-confessional society.

Many research works show that a collective identity encourages citizens to have a positive attitude towards establishing good relations with individuals of another ethnicity. Thereby, the positive nature and positive aspects of civic identity improves the social interaction and this increases the self-esteem and national pride of the individual, causing them to strive to benefit the future of their homeland and motivating the person. This, in turn, guarantees the stability in the state. The most important thing is that the positive nature of civic identity unites the people and is one of the main conditions for stability of the multicultural society of Kazakhstan.

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