

The Culture of Interethnic Concord in Kazakhstan: Peculiarities of Formation and Development

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Abstract—This paper describes the historical development of interethnic concord in the Republic of Kazakhstan, and emphasizes the role of tolerance mentality of the Kazakh people in ethno-political policy of the country. Moreover, pointing out interethnic concord as a powerful stabilizing factor, it analyses the specifics of interethnic policy in multinational Kazakh society. It summarizes that the culture of interethnic concord can be a model of ethno-political policy of Kazakhstan.

Keywords—Interethnic relations, the culture of interethnic concord, multiculturalism, tolerance, stability in society.

I. INTRODUCTION

OVER the centuries the fates of many nations - bearers of different cultures, religions and traditions - linked on the historical lands of Kazakhstan. Therefore, it happened so that 130 different ethnic groups live together in peace and harmony in Kazakhstan. Meanwhile, the lasting co-existence of different ethnic minorities has formed a stable tradition of tolerance in Kazakh society.

Since the first days of independence, uniting the whole Kazakh society and ensuring a full-fledged co-existence of all ethnic groups have become the basic trend of national policy of the country. Thanks to the purposeful and consecutive state policy, during the difficult transition period Kazakhstan managed to avoid religious confrontations, destabilization and social split. The initial intention to form not ethnic but civil community has become the basis of social concord and stability.

The main criterion of creating civil community in poly-ethnic society is to preserve consent and equality of ethnic groups. The time has proved that to reconcile interests of

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citizens, regardless of their ethnic differences to be the most reasonable way. To ensure interethnic concord and civil unity is one of the preconditions for the development of Kazakhstan and reconstruction of social, economic and political spheres.

Today, the practice of Kazakhstan in ensuring interethnic concord is curiously being analyzed by the OSCE countries. Moreover, the model of interethnic concord has become one of the preconditions of Kazakhstan's Chairmanship in this competent organization. Therefore, the problem of interethnic relations is of great importance amid the other complicated and contradictory issues of the poly-ethnic society.

At the XVI session of the Assembly of People of Kazakhstan, President N.A.Nazarbayev noted: "We should seek for new ways of preserving originality, ethnic and cultural variety of the people of Kazakhstan" [1]. That's why, one of the vital problems in improving interethnic relations is to create and develop interethnic concord culture.

II. PECULIARITIES OF DEVELOPING INTERETHNIC RELATIONS IN KAZAKHSTAN

Kazakhstan is a poly-ethnic state, as more than 130 ethnic groups make up 30% of the total population. Due to some historical events, Kazakhstan was home to different nationalities at different periods of time, and became a multinational state.

The process that Kazakhstan became a multinational society covered a long historical period of time, being divided into three stages.

The first stage began, when Kazakhstan became part of the Russian Empire. By the transition from nomadic to the settled way of life, that integration brought changes in lifestyle and values of the nation. That was the time when Kazakh intelligentsia (professional classes) emerged focusing their attention on the vital values of the society.

During that period, as a result of colonization of the north-west and north-east parts of Kazakhstan by Russian imperial authorities, Slavonic region had emerged. The region was predominantly headed by Cossacks including Bashkirs, Turkmens, Tatars, Kalmyks, and Karakalpaks.

The second stage was related to the accession of Kazakhstan to the USSR. That period was said to have brought many positive changes to political, legal, economic, social, cultural and educational spheres of Kazakhstan,

providing quite new intellectual opportunities, thus Kazakhstan reached the status of statehood.

At that stage, the polyethnic composition of Kazakhstan had a rapid and dynamic growth. The Decree of the Council of Labor and Defense of the USSR, issued on October 17, 1924, on urgent commitments of colonization and settlement was a vivid example. The document was aimed to industrialize the uncultivated lands of Kazakhstan by settling people from other parts of the Soviet Union. This operation was carried out in two ways: to voluntarily settle the people and by use of force. In fact, the latter was largely practiced.

Until 1940 approximately 65000 peasants had already settled in Kazakhstan [2], among who were approximately 6478 Ukrainans, 2031 Beloruses, 591 Mordovas, 917 Tatars, and 876 Chuvash, 1142 from Voronyezh, 1415 from Kursk, 574 from Ryazansk, and 1068 from other parts [3].

The third stage covers the period of independent Kazakhstan and its becoming a subject of international community. This period offered new opportunities to ethnic groups to freely develop and renew their culture. Our compatriots, who once had been forced to leave the motherland, returned back. Relying on the uniting role of the Kazakhs, a range of all possible social and economic programs have been elaborated in order to keep national integrity and interethnic concord; the population has increased, birth rate went up. At present, there are about 136 ethnic groups in Kazakhstan. According to 2009 census, the population of the country comprises 1640861 people among whom 10989916 (67%) are Kazakhs, and 5412945 (33%) – representatives of other ethnicities [4].

The third stage is outlined with the fact that mutual concord and solidarity of ethnic minorities in Kazakhstan provide political stability, which overtly promotes national integrity. This is one of the main priorities of the Doctrine of National Unity of Kazakhstan (hereafter the Doctrine) and Development Strategy of Kazakhstan-2030.

Ethno-national policy of independent Kazakhstan is based on interethnic tolerance and social consent. Consequently, the period of ethno-national policy evolution of the country since its independence can be described in several stages.

The first stage (1991-1995) covers the formation period of the first national policy of the country. The country was able to take own decisions on ethnic issues and domestic policy. That period was characterized by dominant national ideology relying on ethnic differences.

During the second period (1995-2002) Kazakhstan's identity was defined, and the whole Kazakh society united referring to the principle "unity in diversity" drafted in the Conception of forming Kazakhstan's state identity.

Moreover, that period witnessed the moment when the Assembly of People of Kazakhstan was formed and its significant role defined; it became consultative and advisory body under the President of the RK. The Constitution adopted in 1995 established a new model of state, and defined the principles which are common to all mankind. The country's ethnopolitics was directed to create the Kazakh nation and

Kazakh State as a political integrity of people referring to civil principles.

The third period (2002-2007) is characterized by the formation of the model of Kazakhstan's interethnic tolerance and social concord. A number of strategic legislative programs were adopted: Strategy of the Assembly of People of Kazakhstan, State Program of Development and Functioning of Language of the RK, and Model of interethnic and interconfessional concord in Kazakhstan.

The fourth period (2007-2010) witnessed the transition from confessional to efficient state ethno-national policy, and integration of the Kazakh society. The amendments made to the Constitution in 2007 formed a new period of democratization, and integrated the Kazakh society making the Kazakh language as a uniting factor. Meanwhile, the Assembly of People of Kazakhstan was authorized by Parliament of the RK, legislative body of the government, and gained constitutional status. Thus, in 2008 Law on the Assembly of People of Kazakhstan was adopted, making the Assembly as a subject of political system of the country, which can regulate interethnic relations in the country.

The fifth period has started since 2010 including the renewal of the country's ethno-national policy, the realization of the Doctrine, Strategic Development Program -2020, and the adoption of Constitutional Law on "First President of the Republic of Kazakhstan is the Leader of Nation". All these documents of political character are aimed to develop social consent, to define the country's new perspective trends and preserve interethnic concord and political stability [5].

III. TOLERANCE IN MAKING INTERETHNIC CONCORD

In multinational Kazakhstan the need for new social-political relations based on dialogue and the principle of tolerance is extremely acute. This seems impossible without involvement of educational system. The principle of tolerance should be emphasized, as only it can enable to avoid possible conflicts and contradictions which arise from ethno-cultural and social differences. Taking into account the polyethnicity, multilingualism, multiculturalism the basis of tolerance should be taught comprehensively.

Therefore, as soon as the country gained the independence, President of the RK N.A. Nazarbayev called for maintaining interethnic concord, as it was the main principle of state policy and the core element of existing reforms; interethnic concord was the guarantee of the country's security, and it was impossible to make any positive changes without it.

Consequently, in 1992, at the First Forum of the Assembly of People of Kazakhstan, devoted to the first years of the independence, President N. Nazarbayev put forward the idea of creating the body on resolving interethnic problems. Thus, in March, 1995 in compliance with the President's Decree the Assembly of People of Kazakhstan was founded.

Since its foundation, the institute has become a very significant body which strengthens the unity and harmony of more than 130 ethnic groups living in the country. In pursuing national policy, the Assembly has an important role in maintaining political stability by uniting the ethno-cultural

centers and small regional Assemblies. Being a united force in the society, it takes an active part in realizing domestic policy commitments. It gives instructions to maintain people's unity and social concord by assessing political events and predicting political situation.

At the initiative of President N. Nazarbayev, the Law on the Assembly of People of Kazakhstan was adopted; it defined its legislative power and its political role in ensuring social and political stability, and interethnic concord [6].

In October, 2009 at the XV session of the Assembly of People of Kazakhstan N. Nazarbayev stressed: "The Assembly is an entirely unique institute, which is the key mechanism of interethnic and inter-confessional concord, and the output of pure political innovation of Kazakhstan [7].

Regulation of the Assembly's activities for the benefits of the country needs a particular attention. It mainly covers the priorities and mechanisms of ensuring national unity in Kazakhstan on the grounds of civil identity, patriotism, spiritual and cultural solidarity, stability and interethnic and inter-confessional harmony in society. Moreover, the people of the country are united under the symbols such as a state language, coat of arms, the flag, and anthem. Realization of balanced language policy is one of the main areas of any country's state activity in interethnic relations. The government displays concern about creation of the required conditions for the development and study of the Kazakh language. As President N. Nazarbayev pointed out, the Assembly of People of Kazakhstan should take control of the nationwide process of mastering the state language by all citizens of the country without any pressure and discrimination.

In a whole, the President supposes the Assembly of People of Kazakhstan to be a source of new ideas as well as the basic maintenance of national unity policy [7].

In October, 2010, at the XVI session of the Assembly of People of Kazakhstan N. Nazarbayev stated: "Having been a guarantor of social consent, the Assembly has turned into a big mediator of integrity, unity, and friendship in the country [8].

Thus, the Assembly of People of Kazakhstan, created at the initiative of President N. Nazarbayev, is a central body in coordinating interethnic relations, and plays a great role in maintaining political stability, social consent and solidarity. That's why, to gain constitutional status for the Assembly is a definitely legal matter. Moreover, that has been a very important decision, as the participation of the Assembly of People of Kazakhstan in social and political life of the country spiritually inspires all nations and ethnic groups to unite in carrying out main civil responsibilities. The focus on the ethno-cultural and social-demographic aspects is of great importance, and it can be noticed in Kazakhstan's poly-ethnic society and in the culture of interethnic relations.

While considering the model of interethnic concord in independent Kazakhstan, it is really important to pay attention to historical and cultural peculiarities of the Kazakhs.

Having emphasized the role and sound policy of the President in creating stability, interethnic concord, and tolerance in the country, A.N. Nysanbayev and G. Malinin,

outstanding scientists of Kazakhstan made such conclusion: "N.A. Nazarbayev proved to be a person who highly respects the culture and religion of other people, and shows greater tolerance to them calling the whole nation for it. In fact, tolerance can be shown in two ways: the first, on the physiological level i.e. relates to one person or a group; the second, on the political level i.e. based on certain laws or set of rules" [9].

Like other civilized independent countries, Kazakhstan is also striving to become a democratic civilized society. Interethnic relations in the country are being established during such transitional, at times complicated and changeable period. Moreover, changeable character of ethnic groups is also so typical in the period of transition. It is obvious, that every civilized society is based on the protection of human rights. It is very important to raise the culture of interethnic relations and to instill respect, mutual understanding, tolerance and consent in people in order to realize civil principles of poly-ethnic society [10].

Therefore, one of the main preconditions of interethnic concord, harmony and solidarity is to display tolerance to a nation or a culture with quite different life style and values. The growth of such tolerance in the whole world including Kazakhstan will indicate the people's high morality, consciousness, legal, psychological and ecological culture.

Thus, tolerance is the main factor in reaching solidarity and harmony for entire contended life of people. The tolerance to others' self-identity is a cultural rule which improves unity and relations common to all mankind. That's why, tolerance is a key factor in consolidating and developing the culture of interethnic relations between people of Kazakhstan.

IV. THE MODEL OF THE CULTURE OF INTERETHNIC CONCORD

State policy of Kazakhstan is being conducted in two directions: national and ethno-cultural. The national policy is characterized at the junction of these two directions. Supporting the social status of ethnic groups, all cultural needs of the society are being provided. This process resulted in the revival of spiritual and cultural values of ethnic groups, the constructive dialogue and friendly relations of people, peace and concord, and tolerance at the state level. Such positive changes have formed stability in the country [11].

Improving mutual relations between ethnic groups and different nationalities of the country enables to consolidate solidarity and strengthen national capacity. To achieve this end, President N. Nazrbayev focused on the following issues in Development Strategy of Kazakhstan -2030:

- to guarantee equal opportunities for all;
- to ensure equal rights of all ethnic groups and remove misunderstanding;
- to develop mutual respect, tolerance and trust among different confessions [12].

The model of national policy of Kazakhstan is based on interethnic tolerance and concord. It was mentioned in the adoption of the Constitution of the RK, in the foundation of the Assembly of People of Kazakhstan (1995), in the Amendments to the Constitution (2007), in the adopted Law

on the Assembly of People of Kazakhstan (2008), and in the Doctrine of National Unity of Kazakhstan (2009-2010).

There have been created effective legislative and conceptual principles of ensuring interethnic concord. The Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan guarantees the protection of interests of all citizens regardless of their ethnicity, race, or religion. The provisions of the Constitution have laid a basis for mutual trust and respect between all ethnic groups.

The main direction of national policy of Kazakhstan is to unite the society under one idea, maintaining equality of ethnic groups. Referring to such social and cultural values, the Kazakh nation has been protecting the society from any possible interethnic conflicts and split.

In his speech President N.Nazarbayev noted: "The role of the Kazakh nation is of great significance in maintaining equality of all people living in Kazakhstan. Being a predominant nation of the country, the Kazakhs should have a sense of responsibility for the other ethnic groups, and correspondingly, those should properly respond to them."

Realization of balanced language policy has become one of the main areas of state activity in the sphere of interethnic relations. According to the Constitution, the Kazakh language is a state language, while state and local bodies have the right to use the Russian language as well. At the same time, the government provides for the development of languages of other ethnic groups. There has been implemented a phased transition to maintaining procedures in Kazakh by central and local state bodies. More than 60 language centers, teaching Kazakh, are working in different regions of the country, the number of which is expected to be redoubled in 2009-2011.

V.CONCLUSION

Analysing the situation of mutual relations of different ethnic groups living in Kazakhstan and national policy relating to them, it is obvious that ethno-political position of the state is based on the culture of interethnic concord. The main factor in forming this culture is the tolerant mentality of the indigenous Kazakh people. Interethnic concord based on tolerance is the basic mechanism in ensuring political stability of the country.

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