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**«Н.Ә. Назарбаев ұсынған этносаралық толеранттылық  
пен қоғамдық келісімнің қазақстандық үлгісі:  
жетістіктер мен жасампаздықтың 20 жылы»  
халықаралық ғылыми-практикалық конференция  
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**«Казакхстанская модель межэтнической  
толерантности и общественного согласия  
Н.А. Назарбаева: двадцать лет успеха и созидания»**

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**К 14 Казахстанская модель межэтнической толерантности и общественного согласия Н.А. Назарбаева: двадцать лет успеха и созидания.** Мат. межд. науч.-практ. конф. (Алматы, 27 марта 2015 г.) – Алматы: Институт философии, политологии и религиоведения КН МОН РК, 2015. – 320 с.

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В сборнике представлены тексты докладов и статьи ведущих отечественных и зарубежных ученых, общественных деятелей и представителей этнокультурных объединений – участников международной научно-практической конференции «Казахстанская модель межэтнической толерантности и общественного согласия Н.А. Назарбаева: двадцать лет успеха и созидания». В материалах раскрывается сущность феномена казахстанской модели межэтнической толерантности и общественного согласия, ее институциональное оформление и значение для мирового научно-практического дискурса.

Сборник предназначен для ученых-обществоведов, представителей республиканских и городских этнокультурных объединений, преподавателей и студентов, а также адресован широкой общественности, интересующейся исследованиями межэтнических отношений.

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## KAZAKHSTAN'S MODEL OF INTERETHNIC TOLERANCE FROM A EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVE

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Ethnocultural and language diversity is a distinctive feature of modern Kazakhstan where more than 100 different ethnic groups are residing [1] and Europe is a very heterogeneous continent, too; most of European countries have one or more minorities on their territories. In the following Kazakhstan's model for interethnic and inter-confessional tolerance and its language policy are described and assessed from a European perspective.

### **The Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan as a model for interethnic co-existence**

The Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan founded in 1995 plays an important role in implementing a modern ethnocultural policy for interethnic co-existence and tolerance. The APK is a unique consultative national political body in Kazakhstan consisting of 384 delegates of the Regional Assemblies of the People. It aims at a representation of all ethnocultural groupings through their self-organisation as ethnic community under the umbrella of the Assembly and its network. APK's activities are generally aimed at ensuring equal rights for ethnic groups of the given state in economic, social, political, cultural and everyday spheres. Group rights of minorities are protected this way.

The representation of ethnocultural diversity finds an important platform in the Houses of Friendship that were opened with the purpose of providing state support to ethnocultural organizations,

members of the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan. They were created to preserve and develop languages and cultures of the peoples' of Kazakhstan, to arrange ethno cultural events, such as forums and symposiums – as the one we are attending right now in Almaty – aimed at teaching vernacular languages and providing social assistance. Conceptually the Houses of Friendship are also aimed at integrating ethnocultural unions, non-governmental and governmental organizations, for providing social initiatives and public consent, and working with youth organizations for example holding Youth Centres Leaders Forums and so on. The Houses of Friendship can be perceived as an institute of civil society.

The idea that each ethnocultural grouping forms a separate movement and that all citizens belonging to it would join a special organisation that would hold cultural assemblies in each region and a general cultural assembly for the whole country follows earlier ideas of *Otto Bauer* and others [2]. The idea was to organize nations not in territorial bodies but in simple association of persons (national cultural autonomy), thus disconnecting the nation from the territory and making of the nation a non-territorial association [3]. Cultural autonomy means that these groups have authority to run their own internal affairs, especially in the areas of education and culture. Each ethnocultural grouping encompasses tightly-organised cultural organisations, cultural centres, schools, and even newspapers.

To conclude, Kazakhstan has, however arguably and unlike its Central Asian counterparts, «officially set out on the path of building a multi-ethnic civic nation» [4]. In European terminology, we can say that Kazakhstan's commitment to institutionalised multiculturalism is one of the pillars of its interethnic policy another is its language policy.

### **Kazakhstan's language policy**

The fact that there is a national language «Kazakh» and the universal post-soviet «Russian» language counts for that most citizens of Kazakhstan can speak two or more languages. Kazakhstan has chosen the path of reasonable language policy of



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bilingualism promoting English as a third language for example at educational institutions. Officially Kazakhstan has a trilingual strategy since 2007: This unique trilingual policy declared by President Nazarbayev sets out the objective – everyone should speak fluent Kazakh (the national language of state), Russian (for everyday transactions and interethnic communication) and English (for international communication). Therefore, the exhibition of the new national museum in Astana for example is naturally trilingual. Kazakhstan's language policy is, however, contested also in the way what alphabet should be used – the Cyrillic as post-soviet continuation, the Latin to stress the pan-Turkic transsociation or less of an option is the Arabic alphabet used before the Sovietization [5].

However, *Melich* and *Adibayeva* in reference to various laws and measures to promote the Kazakh language note a «wide instrumental assortment accompanied by other measures taken (for example, repatriation of the ethnic Kazakhs (*oralmans*) from other territories), aiming to revitalize and enforce the national values, language and unity finally frames into the process of 'kazakhization', which is highly discussed today and represents a complicated, often controversial socio-political process, naturally affecting the overall scenario of national self-identification, civil unification and nation-building in the state» [6].

To conclude, the moderate nation-building project and the promotion and implementation of Kazakhstan's model of interethnic and interconfessional tolerance are non-exclusive simultaneous processes. A success criterion might be that assimilation of a respective other group must not be on the agenda of either of the ethnic groupings (in conflict or not with each other) in the short or medium term.

### **Consociationalism as a model for interethnic co-existence: an assessment**

The question is can institutions pacify diverse societies? Taking the European experience into account consociationalist democracies seem to be more peaceful. Following the *Lipset-Rokkan thesis* that societies with many social cleavages opt for multi-party systems

[7] as well as *Lijphart's* power sharing approach (consociationalism) [8] stating that socially heterogeneous countries should opt for consociationalism which includes sharing of executive power, federalism, proportional representation and minority vetoes the answer is yes, institutions can pacify diverse societies.

Kazakhstan's experience is unique and instructive balancing ethnic diversity with nation-building built upon the ethnic Kazakh tradition at the same time. The Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan celebrating its 20th birthday is worldwide a unique organization [9]. However, there exists a similar institution in the Russian Federation, but about the work of this institution virtually nothing is known.

Firstly, that the Assembly of People of Kazakhstan delegates nine deputies in the lower house of parliament is a step in the right direction. It is a step from institutionalized ethnocultural representation – by organisations preserving traditions, folklore and dances as well as facilitating the articulation of ethno-political issues – to participation and power sharing.

Secondly, President Nursultan Nazarbayev understands his presidency in ethno-political terms as a grand coalition government (between parties/interests from different segments of society) cumulating in Kazakhstani patriotism. The secretariat of the Assembly, being its working body, is included in the structure of the Administration of the President as an independent department. It can be perceived as a first step of sharing of executive power. He highlighted in April 2014 in his speech on the 'Strategy Kazakhstan 2050: the culture of peace and concord' at the XXI session of the Assembly the following:

«From the first days of acquiring independence we have had thousands of meetings in different regions, cities, and villages. About twenty years ago when we were creating the Assembly we passed through all well-known world models. We have found the only secure mechanism to unite people on a common patriotic platform. The idea is understandable to everyone and it helps to provide people's everyday needs, such as jobs, welfare, and education for children, health, housing facilities, security and rest. In our society all people have equal rights, there are no ethnical

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privileges, and the law applies to everyone without discrimination. All people of Kazakhstan are the children of one Motherland. We all are different, but we are the children of the Kazakhstan people. We all are targeted at the well-being of Kazakhstanis and the prosperity of our Motherland. That is our common success and pride. That is the policy that I have chosen, has pursued, and I will continue to pursue as the President of Kazakhstan. Every *akim*, every manager, and every citizen should ensure stability and concord in his everyday work» [10].

Finally, in a way there is segmental autonomy in the cultural sector.

To conclude, Kazakhstan's ethnocultural policy helped without doubt to pacify the country by an institutionalized representation of ethnocultural diversity and concerns – especially if we compare it with neighbouring and post-soviet countries like Kyrgyzstan and Ukraine. An issue which is especially now pointed out during the presidential campaign having presidential elections ahead on the 26<sup>th</sup> of April, 2015, as I could witness at a meeting for all employee's at the Eurasian National University on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of April.

### **Future challenges: inflow of labour migrants and returnees (oralmans)**

Nevertheless, I have also noticed that there are nationalist sentiments in Kazakhstan. People who hold these views – such as 'Kazakhstan for the Kazakhs' – can express them in the local press, and at scientific conferences. It is normal for a democratic country. In all European countries right-wing political parties exist expressing similar views such as in France the party Front National, in Germany the Alternative for Germany (AfD), as well as the Party for Freedom in the Netherlands to give only a few examples. That the Assembly of People of Kazakhstan advocates for tolerance and free development of all ethnic groups living in Kazakhstan therefore cannot be overestimated. Citizens, who do not share the nationalist ideology, have their own organization, are publishing books and appearing in the media under the umbrella of the APK.

Furthermore, for a country, that is a recipient of incoming labour migrants (for example from poorer Central Asian

neighbouring countries), foreign students and so on, intercultural dialogue between local population and migrant workers as well as other foreigners will be essential. The incoming labour migrants, Kazakh returnees (*oralmans*) [11] and remigration of those who left earlier (ethnic Germans for example) [12] can be seen as a sign that Kazakhstan became a country worthy to live in. However, it creates also new issues of integration, the quest for modern migration legislation, social policies as well as the need for state sponsored opportunities to learn Kazakh and/or Russian.

A report by UNDP acknowledges that not all of the *oralmans* are integrated into the Kazakhstan's society [13]. The perception of *oralmans* by local population remains following this report mostly negative. First of all, they say that the *oralmans* have different mentality influenced by the surrounding culture, traditions and mentality of their previous home country. Local Kazakhs unlike *oralmans* have gone through a Soviet period which left an imprint of Soviet man on them by suppressing their national identity and culture, thus cutting the historical and cultural ties between the two sides. The UNDP report states, due to the differences in the realities of living in different foreign countries, the *oralmans* brought to Kazakhstan the legacy of other cultures and subcultures other than the local ones [14]. Also, the difference between the two may occur on religious grounds, particularly those coming from non-CIS countries are for the most part more religious than local Kazakhs, which results in different values and way of life. And because of the perceived differences, local Kazakhs are not eager to communicate with *oralmans*, thus widening the existing gap between the two 'groups' of ethnic Kazakhs. Some local Kazakhs are even against government's privileges or benefits to *oralmans*, because it may cause certain social tensions between newcomers and socially backward parts of society. According to a research done by Centre for Social Technologies, respondents in the higher income brackets had more tolerance towards *oralmans*, whereas people in the lower income brackets had more negatives attitudes [15]. People who are at a disadvantaged position in the country think that the government unfairly treats *oralmans* giving them benefits that local people hardly received. An interviewee continued arguing

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that *oralmans* behave as if they are purer Kazakhs, thus irritating the local Kazakhs. One evident difference that obviously all local Kazakh interviewees noted was a language difference. *Oralmans* not exposed to Sovietization have preserved Kazakh language in its pure substance, what local Kazakh perceive as archaic and almost forgotten nowadays. The language barrier also hampers the communication between the two parties because the majority of *oralmans* speak fluently Kazakh, but little Russian, which is the other way for many Kazakhs.

The tensions between *oralmans* and local Kazakhs and their mutual non-acceptance of each other as equals can have its roots in the government policy as well. The Kazakh government initiated a massive repatriation program, but did not set a base for its successful implementation – legal basis, a comprehensive institutional framework, a proper settlement policy, adaptation facilities (language centres, employment assistance, etc.). Because of the difficulties that *oralmans* face in the initial period of resettlement and further, they start reflecting of going back to the country they came from. The same process can be observed with German late repatriates (ethnic Germans from the Russian Federation or Kazakhstan or some other post-socialist country) who left Germany back to the countries they came from because of the inability to adjust to the new environment and discrimination as 2<sup>nd</sup> class citizens from the ‘authentic’ Germans [16].

Thus, the successful integration of returnees and labour migrants is and will be a challenge for the Kazakhstan’s ethnic policy and the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan as it was and is in Europe.

### Conclusion

Kazakhstan’s model for interethnic and interconfessional tolerance has prevented violent conflicts and facilitated a peaceful co-existence of various ethnocultural groupings in Kazakhstan for the last 20 years. The model of consociationalism offers further perspectives for future development(s) and challenges such as federalism [17] as a form of regional power sharing and extended

power sharing in the executive as well as minority vetoes for countries experiencing ethnicized conflicts like Ukraine [18]. Federalism undoubtedly fosters a culture of accommodation.

A success criterion for any consociational model according the discussed literature is that successive elites must be motivated to work for the preservation of the consociational settlement and they themselves must enjoy a sufficient degree of autonomy within their communities enabling them to make compromises and concessions without having to fear outbidding and outflanking by ethno-centric radicals. Therefore it would be necessary that the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan is more than a «grouping of presidential loyalists representing the country's ethnic groups» as Lillis critically stated [19]. In such a case, the AKP could further play its role and even be a mediator in a presidential change to come in the unforeseeable future of Kazakhstan.

Finally, consociational power-sharing contains and regulates conflict, but we should not forget that by institutionalizing it may also cement ethnic divisions. Something we have to be aware of in Europe as well as in Kazakhstan.

### Literature

1. <http://www.stat.gov.kz>
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3. A non-territorial identity formation suits the nomadic tradition where identity was rather constructed a long genealogical lines than on a territorial notion of belonging.
4. *Melich, Jiri; Aigul Adibayeva*: Nation-building and cultural policy in Kazakhstan, in: *European Scientific Journal*, Vol. 2, 2013, p. 265–279, here p. 266.
5. *Kaiser, Markus*: Forms of transsociation as counter-processes to nation building in Central Asia, in: *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 22, Nr. 2-3, p. 315-331.
6. *Melich; Adibayeva*: Ibid. p. 271f.
7. *Lipset, Seymour Martin; Rokkan, Stein*: Party systems and voter alignments: cross-national perspectives, 1967.
8. The main 'consociational model' (Lijphart/Netherlands) has 4 non-majoritarian devices: a coalition government by representatives of

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all the ethnic groups; representation proportional to their relative sizes; autonomy in their group organisation; and mutual vetoes to protect particular ethnic group interests. See: Lijphart, Arendt: *Typologies of Democratic Systems*, Comparative Political Studies, 1968; Lijphart, Arendt *The Politics of Accommodation: Pluralism and Democracy in the Netherlands*, 1968; Lijphart, Arendt: *Democracy in Plural Societies*, 1977.

9. <http://www.assembly.kz>.

10. [http://akorda.kz/ru/page/page\\_216501\\_vystuplenie-glavy-gosudarstva-predsedatelya-assamblei-naroda-kazakhstanana-n-a-nazarbaevana-xxi-sessii](http://akorda.kz/ru/page/page_216501_vystuplenie-glavy-gosudarstva-predsedatelya-assamblei-naroda-kazakhstanana-n-a-nazarbaevana-xxi-sessii).

11. Оралмандар: Foreigners or individuals without citizenship with Kazakh ethnicity, who at the moment of 16 December 1991 lived constantly or temporarily outside of Kazakhstan and who came to the territory of Kazakhstan for permanent living. See: [http://www.almaty.kz/page.php?lang=1&page\\_id=1472](http://www.almaty.kz/page.php?lang=1&page_id=1472).

12. German late repatriates (in German language: *Spätaussiedler*).

13. UNDP: *Положение оралманов в Казахстане*, Almaty, 2006.

14. Ibid.

15. Ibid.

16. *Kaiser, Markus; Michael Schönhuth: Einmal Deutschland und wieder zurück. Umkehrstrategien von Spätaussiedlern im Kontext sich wandelnder Migrationsregime*, in: Kaiser, Markus; Schönhuth, Michael (eds.): *Zuhause? Fremd? – Migrations- und Beheimatungsstrategien zwischen Deutschland und Eurasien*, Bielefeld, 2015.

17. In Europe for example, the state of Switzerland is based on the principle of federalism. Other examples of federal states in Europe are Germany, Austria, Belgium and Russia showing how different federations might be.

18. To stay together, which is no sure thing, Ukraine will have to construct a federal system that offers the various oblasts, or regions, differing levels of autonomy. It's called asymmetrical federalism and it works in Canada, with Quebec more autonomous than New Brunswick, each by choice.

19. *Lillis, Joanna: Polyglot Harmony*, in: *TOL – Transitions Online: Regional Intelligence*, 15.01.2009. Retrieved April 4, 2015, from <http://www.tol.org/client/article/20300-polyglot-harmony.html>.