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Kazakhstan's national identity in the context
of strategic partnership with Russia

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KAZAKHSTAN'S NATIONAL IDENTITY IN THE CONTEXT OF STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP WITH RUSSIA

Abstract. The article examines the main aspects of the definition of Kazakhstani identity in the context of strategic partnership with the Russian Federation, its historical and political analysis at the turn of the XXI century and on the eve of the 30th anniversary of the independence of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Particular emphasis is placed on the ideological basis for strengthening the independence of Kazakhstan through a well-grounded multi-vector foreign policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan and its role in the context of strategic partnership with the Russian Federation in the context of the formation of a new world order in the modern system of international relations.

Keywords: national identity, concept of unionist nationalism, implementation, division, national interests.

Жанат Мақашева, Асем Қашкинбаева РЕСЕЙМЕН СТРАТЕГИЯЛЫҚ ӘРІШТЕСТІК ЖАҒДАЙЫНДАҒЫ ҚАЗАҚСТАННЫҢ ҰЛТТЫҚ БІРЕГЕЙЛІГІ

Аңдатпа. Мақалада Қазақстан Республикасы тәуелсіздігінің 30 жылдығы қарсаңындағы Ресей Федерациясымен стратегиялық серіктестік жағдайындағы қазақстандық бірегейлікті анықтаудың негізгі қырлары қарастырылып, тарихи-саяси сараптамалық талдау жасалған. Қазақстан Республикасына тән және стратегиялық идеологиялық бағытта негізделген көпвекторлы сыртқы саясаты арқылы еліміздің тәуелсіздігін нығайтудың идеологиялық негізіне және оның Ресей Федерациясымен

стратегиялық серіктестік жағдайындағы рөлінің қалыптасуына ерекше назар аударылады. Оған қоса халықаралық қатынастардың жаңа әлемдік тәртіптің орын алуы жүйесіндегі бірегейлік мәселесі талқыланды.

Түйін сөздер: ұлттық бірегейлік, юнионистік ұлтшылдық тұжырымдамасы, іске асырылу, бөліну, ұлттық мүдделер.

Жанат Макашева, Асем Кашкинбаева
НАЦИОНАЛЬНАЯ ИДЕНТИЧНОСТЬ КАЗАХСТАНА В
КОНТЕКСТЕ СТРАТЕГИЧЕСКОГО ПАРТНЕРСТВА С РОССИЕЙ

Аннотация. Статья рассматривает основные аспекты определения казахстанской идентичности в контексте стратегического партнерства с Российской Федерацией, его исторического и политологического анализа на рубеже XXI века и в канун 30-летия независимости Республики Казахстан. Особый акцент направлен на идеологическую основу укрепления независимости Казахстана путем обоснованной многовекторной внешней политики Республики Казахстан и ее роли в контексте стратегического партнерства с Российской Федерацией в условиях формирования нового миропорядка в современной системе международных отношений.

Ключевые слова: национальная идентичность, концепция юнионистского национализма, имплементация, разделение, национальные интересы.

Introduction

After the USSR collapse, the states that emerged in its place demonstrate a different, largely opposite attitude towards integration with Russia. Some states willingly join integration associations led by Russia, while others avoid them. Kazakhstan is among the first, being a member of all regional organizations in the post-Soviet area, headed by Russia, and at the same time comes up with integration initiatives. The experts define such a policy of Kazakhstan as unionist nationalism, in which the national identity of the country finds expression.

Due to the common Soviet historical past and the persisting Sovietization of the population, the dominance of the Russian language and cul-

ture, the attitude towards Russia as the core of the USSR and the center of the post-Soviet regional security complex is of particular importance for the population and elites of Kazakhstan. Integration relations between Kazakhstan and Russia have a strong emotional component, which to a large extent continues the Soviet rhetoric of “friendship of peoples”. In this form, relations with Russia have a significant impact on the national identity of Kazakhstan by and large.

Research Methodology

When it comes to methods applied to cover and find the results, the author used content-analysis method to have a clear picture of understanding the matter discussed itself to simplify in understanding the readers. The study selected method of description was necessary for having theoretical frameworks of the research itself to conceptualize the concept of unionist nationalism in broad sense. Elusive nature of national identities poses a challenge for researchers. The author overcomes this challenge by adopting a multi-method approach to bring together the qualitative (national identity narratives) and quantitative (measurable dimensions) elements of national identities in compelling ways.

Research Results

The Analysis of the impact of Kazakhstan-Russia relations in the post-Soviet period on the national identity of Kazakhstan demonstrated the evolutionary nature of the formation of this identity. During the first two decades, unionist nationalism dominated in relations between Kazakhstan and Russia, which gave the relations of these countries an ideologized character in the spirit of the Soviet rhetoric/concept of “friendship of peoples”.

Result Discussion

One of the broadly discussed topics in Kazakhstan today in the national level of public discussion is the existence and opposition of Kazakh and Kazakhstani identities respectively. In accordance with this division, the main part of the multi-ethnic society identifies itself as Kazakhs, while the other part as Kazakhs, not wanting to consider themselves as Kazakhstanians. In this sense, there are many obstacles to have a national identity in Kazakhstan to be confirmed officially and go through with the *nation-state building process* in strategic perspective after 30 year of

state's independence. According to the Director of Central Asian Program at George Washington University, prominent scholar on Central Asian region Marlene Laruelle, "today in Kazakhstan, in addition to Kazakh and Kazakhstanian identities, there is also a third type of identity is being taken place, that the researcher defines as a "transnational" identity. This type of identity is proposed by the ruling elite with the aim of including Kazakhstan in the modernization and globalization processes and taking advantage of the policy of openness for both the state and the population" [1]. The question of national identity has been a topic for debate and discussion in essence towards proposing the notion of sovereignty and independence strengthening for a young state since its having involved into the international community as well as a subject of international law.

As a matter of fact, today, the mass consciousness as a whole society is still dominated by Kazakh and Kazakhstanian identities accordingly. The rivalry between these two identities can be interpreted as a confrontation in the question of which symbols of which of these identities should occupy a central position in Kazakhstan as an agenda, and which one should move to the out of agenda by and large. The desire of the titular ethnic group to give its symbols a central position in society, and to establish the new independent state that was formed on the site of the former Soviet Republic as Kazakhstan, as the name of nationalizing nationalism in traditional oriental manner received in the literature [2].

In most post-Soviet states, the nationalizing nationalism of the titular ethnic group dominates in the confrontation between the titular identity and the identity of the non-titular population, and this dominance is practically not disputed by the rest of society due to the dominance of demographically the titular ones. In these countries, the language of the indigenous population as one of its main symbols is becoming the main one, and the Russian language is gradually losing its position in public life [3]. A similar situation is observed with other ethnic symbols, for example, in art, history and other parts of society in everyday life.

The situation is different with the correlation of basic major identities in Kazakhstan, where the culture of the indigenous population can not ensure the dominance of Kazakh symbols in the linguistic space and other spheres of social life in Kazakhstan. One of the main reasons for this situation is that a significant part of Kazakhs have not only Kazakh, but also Kazakhstanian identity respectively. Therefore, not only purely Kazakh symbols, but also symbols of other peoples of Kazakhstan, primarily

Russians, are close to them. Thus, many Kazakhs (mainly urban) do not speak their own language, for them the main and often the only language of communication and writing is Russian. As First President Nursultan Nazarbayev noted in an interview with heads of Kazakh-language newspapers in April 2008, out of nine million Kazakhs, four million do not speak their own language [4]. For sure and obviously, if we compare 2008 and 2021 the data there are huge differences could be observed in increasing the number of Kazakhs themselves with the total number of population 13 029 227 that makes 69,01 % [5] of all population rate in Kazakhstan today. It does not mean that all of them speak own language.

As an example appealing to 2018, of the remaining 5 million native-speaking Kazakhs by 2008, a large majority also largely speak Russian. They use the Russian language in their professional activities, in communication with Russians and representatives of other ethnic groups of Kazakhstan, in obtaining information from Russian and local newspapers, magazines, books, television and radio, published and broadcast in Russian. It follows that Kazakhs who emphasize their Kazakh identity and deny Kazakhstani identity do not constitute a majority in their ethnic group. However, they are most active in strengthening the symbolic core of Kazakh identity. At the same time, it would be a mistake to assert that the Kazakh identity rests exclusively on this part of the indigenous population of Kazakhstan. Those Kazakhs who, along with the Kazakh identity, share the Kazakhstani one, also contribute to the overgeneralized Kazakhstani identity.

What is the reason for such a bifurcation of the national identity of the Kazakhs, thanks to which they are susceptible to both Kazakh symbols and symbols of Russian culture? To explain this phenomenon, it is useful, in my opinion, to turn to the *concept of unionist nationalism*, which was used by the American political scientist Henry Hale in the article “Cause without a Rebel: Kazakhstan’s Unionist Nationalism in the USSR and CIS” [6].

Giving an explanation of the concept of unionist nationalism in its general form, Hale immediately asks the question: why the elites or masses in a region whose ethnic composition differs from the main population of a multinational state prefer “someone else’s rule”, that is, the rule of another ethnic group, within this state, and not your own nation state? In the scientific literature on nationalism and in the media, the main attention is paid to separatist movements, which aim to separate from the “alien” multinational state and create their own independent state. At the

same time, ethnic groups preferring to remain in a union, multinational state dominated by other ethnic groups, are, as a rule, in the shadow of political analysis [7].

Meanwhile, as Hale emphasizes, such unionist groups, that is, those oriented towards an alliance with other ethnic groups within the framework of a multinational state, are actually more numerous than the separatist ones. Indeed, little attention is paid to the fact that one or more unionist regions can always be found in a multinational state around almost every separatist region in a multinational state. An example is the Yoruba people in the civil war to secede Biafra from Nigeria in the 1960s. A closer example to us is the North Caucasus, where separatist Chechnya was surrounded by unionist Ingushetia, North Ossetia, Dagestan and other national republics of the Russian Federation. One can often see how unionist ethnic groups defend political integration in a situation where they have ample reason to demand separation from the state they are part of. Political science and the theory of nationalism have to pay a high price for the lack of attention to *unionist ethnic groups in political science and the theory of nationalism*: after all, it is thanks to unionist groups that one can understand how different ethnic groups live together peacefully in a multinational state [8].

Hale also ranks Kazakhstan among the unionist nations, revealing in his article the main features of his unionist nationalism and giving this nationalism his rationale. He outlines the main problem of his article in a logically sharpened form: what is the reason that the Kazakhs, on the one hand, had every reason for separatism and nationalism, but, on the other hand, the development of events during the collapse of the USSR and after the formation of the CIS quite clearly testifies about the fact that until the last moment Kazakhstan tried to preserve the Soviet Union and remain in it, and after its collapse, up to this day, Kazakhstan's policy is aimed at strengthening the CIS? [9].

It should be noted that the implementation of the pro-Russian foreign policy of Kazakhstan is a manifestation of unionist nationalism already in the new, post-Soviet conditions. But unionist nationalism in Kazakhstan has not only an external, but also an internal dimension. It is manifested in the fact that many Kazakhs, for one reason or another, support the status quo in the cultural sphere, which persists in the post-Soviet period. Such Kazakhs can be ranked among the carriers of the Kazakh identity. In this sense, Kazakh identity turns out to be closely related to the unionist

nationalism of Kazakhs, which manifests itself in their priority attitude to the Russian language and culture and in the support of special relations between Kazakhstan and Russia [10].

At the same time, in the post-Soviet period, the proportion of those who oppose the existing status quo in the sphere of culture and seek to change the situation in such a way that elements of Kazakh ethno-cultural symbolism take a central place in the socio-cultural structure of Kazakhstani society has significantly increased among Kazakhs. They can be considered carriers/followers of Kazakh identity, which is closely related to Kazakh ethno-cultural, titular nationalism and is the antipode of unionist nationalism by and large.

In this paper, we proceed not from a *primordialist* understanding of national identity, but from its constructivist understanding. This means that we consider national identity not as something given from the centuries, but as a product of the activities of national elites. Therefore, national identity is not something unchanging in its content and character, but changing as a result of the efforts of the power elites and figures of art and science.

In this regard, the question arises: who was the chief designer of the unionist national identity of Kazakhstan? In my opinion, such was the power elite of the republic, primarily the communist leader of Kazakhstan since 1989 and the First President of independent Kazakhstan since 1990, Nursultan Nazarbayev. Unlike the Baltics and Transcaucasia, the population of Kazakhstan was focused not on national movements and organizations autonomous from the government, but on the president and the Supreme Council, which at that time played an active role in the socio-political and national processes of the republic.

In its most general form, the unionist nationalism of Kazakhstan in the last period of the USSR existence can be represented in the following form:

Firstly, it includes Kazakh ethnic nationalism within the Kazakh SSR itself.

Secondly, it includes the preservation of the union state in an updated form, but with the strengthening of economic ties and economic support of Kazakhstan at the expense of, first of all, Russia. The unionist nationalism of the Central Asian republics had a similar appearance. It is especially important to note that both the elites and the masses in these republics had a clear idea that Russia would continue to play the dominant role in

the new state and the Russians would remain the dominant nation in it.

Henry Hale believes that Nursultan Nazarbayev perceived the dissolution of the USSR and the formation of the CIS extremely negatively [11]. However, realizing that the collapse of the USSR had become an accomplished reality, from which it was no longer possible to get away, he became an active and consistent supporter of the strengthening and development of the CIS. While many republics perceived the CIS as an instrument of their “civilized divorce,” Nazarbayev tried to use the Commonwealth as a way to recreate and strengthen the economic ties between the former Soviet republics, severed as a result of the collapse of the USSR, and, above all, ties between Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation. In other words, with the collapse of the USSR, the unionist nationalism of Kazakhstan did not disappear into oblivion, but the president of the newly independent state began to adapt it to the new conditions.

The integration policy of Nazarbayev to strengthen the CIS is well known. From the very beginning of the existence of the Commonwealth, Kazakhstan has been one of the active developers and supporters of the agreements signed within the framework of the CIS. For example, by May 1993, Kazakhstan had signed 312 out of 318 documents adopted by the CIS, slightly inferior in this indicator only to Russia, which signed 315 documents. Ukraine at that very time signed only 229, and Azerbaijan did 72 agreements. Of the total of 318 documents adopted by the CIS, 121 agreements related to the creation of a variety of central bodies of the commonwealth, of which Kazakhstan signed 118 agreements. In the economic sphere, Kazakhstan has signed all 118 adopted agreements. In the non-economic sphere, 199 agreements were adopted, of which Kazakhstan signed 194 [12].

The further development of events in the post-Soviet space showed that far from all the states of Central Asia demonstrate the level of unionist nationalism that is characteristic of Kazakhstan. The leaders of the Central Asian states became more and more convinced that Russia, weakened after the collapse of the USSR, was unable, as before, to provide them with subsidies, subventions and other types of economic assistance. The history of the ruble zone has clearly demonstrated that under the new conditions Russia is guided primarily by its own interests, and not by the interests of its Central Asian allies.

It is not surprising that the pro-Russian, allied orientation in the foreign policy of these states began to weaken. On the contrary, their orientation

towards other directions, other states are growing. At the same time, the rhetoric of their own national interests is also strengthening. To a greater extent, this is typical for Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, to a lesser extent - for Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. As a matter of fact, their relations with Russia are characterized by an increasing pragmatism. The unionist nationalism of these states has not disappeared, but in their domestic and foreign policies they are increasingly guided by separatist nationalism, which prioritizes the interests of their own nation and state, rather than the interests of Central Asia or the CIS [13].

If we talk about Eurasian Integration and National Identity of Kazakhstan, the failure to create a ruble zone did not weaken Kazakhstan's unionist nationalism. Subsequently, Kazakhstan has repeatedly initiated almost all integration projects in the post-Soviet space. The largest and most daring integration initiative of Kazakhstan remains the idea of a Eurasian Union, that Nursultan Nazarbayev presented during his lecture at the Moscow State University in March 1994, four months after Russia's refusal to create a ruble zone and admit Kazakhstan into it.

Neither in 1994 nor in subsequent years did the idea of a Eurasian union receive the necessary support in Russia and other post-Soviet states, except for Kyrgyzstan. For Kazakhstan in 1990-2000, the idea of Eurasianism and Eurasian integration was implemented, according to the President of Kazakhstan, in the form of three organizations:

- the Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEC),
- the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and
- the Conference for Interaction of Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA) [14].

However, the level of integration of states in these organizations did not correspond to what Nazarbayev proposed in 1994.

Russian President Vladimir Putin (then Prime Minister) gave a new breath to the idea of a Eurasian Union, in October 2011 published an article in the Izvestia newspaper, where he stated that one of the main priorities of his presidency until 2018 would be the creation in the post-Soviet Space Eurasian Union. This union will become one of the most powerful integrative associations in the modern world. The Eurasian Union will include the post-Soviet states, while this will not be the revival of the USSR [15].

In Kazakhstan, the idea of a Eurasian Union put forward in 1994 by Nazarbayev was met positively and enjoyed almost complete support of the population. Not a single political force in Kazakhstan, including the opposition, has spoken publicly in the media or at mass meetings against

Nazarbayev's project. Moreover, there were hopes in society that this idea would be embodied in socio-economic practice.

One of the main explanations for this phenomenon is the time factor. By March 1994, a little more than two years had passed since the collapse of the USSR, and the memory of it was still fresh. At the same time, all the former Soviet republics faced enormous economic problems associated with the transition to market economic relations and the destruction of economic ties between the republics. In this situation, any call for integration between the newly independent states received the support of the population, faced with rising prices, unemployment rate, delays in the payment of wages, pensions and benefits, and a sharp decline in welfare. The high level of support for the initiative of the leader of Kazakhstan was, to a certain extent, a continuation of the high level of support for the preservation of the USSR in the March 1991 referendum and evidence of the high level of unionist nationalism of Kazakhstan and Kazakhs themselves respectively. This was based on economic reasons: people were ready to sacrifice, if not all, then a significant share of the sovereignty of their new national states, just to restore the standard of living that they had in Soviet times.

In today's Kazakhstan, there is no longer that practically unanimous support for the idea of a Eurasian Union that took place in the 1990s. The protests against integration projects with Russia began in Kazakhstan even before Putin came up with a project for a Eurasian Union. They started in early 2010 in connection with the Customs Union (CU). On March 18, 2010, a large group of leaders and representatives of national-patriotic organizations, political parties, NGOs, public figures and the intelligentsia sent a statement to President Nazarbayev and other leaders of the state demanding to denounce the agreement on the creation of the Customs Union [16]. The main argument of the authors of the letter was the assertion that the CU is an integration association beneficial for Russia and an unprofitable integration association for Kazakhstan. Kazakhstan's membership in the CU, from their point of view, will lead to the loss of economic independence, followed by the loss of the country's political independence. In response to the desire of the leadership of Kazakhstan to join the CU, the authors of the statement declared the creation of a public movement "Defense of Independence".

Thus, if in the 1990s the idea of Eurasian integration had almost unanimous support among the elites and the population, then in the 2010s there

is a noticeable divergence in relation to this idea among the elites of Kazakhstan. The Kazakh elites, represented by national-patriotic organizations close to them in terms of the views and goals of political parties and movements, and parts of the intelligentsia, oppose Kazakhstan's accession to the EAEU, seeing this as a threat to the country's independence.

In this regard, it is interesting to compare the attitude of Kazakh national-patriots and the authorities of Kazakhstan to the issues of independence and Eurasian integration. Both groups declare the independence of Kazakhstan as the most important value for them. For the authorities, the concept of independence is central to its ideology. In the official ideology, the independence and national statehood of Kazakhstan has recently been associated with Nursultan Nazarbayev as the head of Kazakhstan since its independence, the Leader of the Nation, but also the founder of a sovereign state, whose activities and efforts are aimed at the post of the president of the state are aimed at the all-round strengthening of its independence [17].

For Kazakh national-patriots, the independence of Kazakhstan is also the most important value due to the nature of the titular, ethno-cultural nationalism - the ideological basis of their activities. Independent Kazakhstan is viewed by them as the state of Kazakhs, which should first of all take care of Kazakhs, their culture, language and material well-being. At the same time, they criticize the authorities, believing that they do not care enough about maintaining and strengthening independence, makes many concessions to the Russian language, Russian culture, and puts itself in a position that is too dependent on Russia. In particular, Kazakhstan's accession to the CU and future accession to the EAEU is viewed as an unacceptable concession to Russia in its hegemonic aspirations in the post-Soviet space.

The ethnic nationalist elites are trying to influence the formation of the "perception of the world" of their ethnos. Kazakh national patriots offer the Kazakhs their "perception of the world", and Russian nationalists do the same in relation to the Russians of Kazakhstan. Both nationalist groups are confident that the most consistent and complete reflect the interests of their ethnic groups. In doing so, they blame each other friend is that by their activities they inflame interethnic relations and undermine social harmony [18].

Consequently, the attitude towards Eurasian integration is one of those issues through the prism of which the difference in views on indepen-

dence between the authorities and national patriots is clearly visible. For the authorities, the independence of Kazakhstan is quite compatible with one or another form of integration with Russia. Moreover, Kazakhstan benefits, primarily in economic terms, from such integration. In other words, for the authorities, the independence of Kazakhstan is quite compatible with its unionist nationalism. On the contrary, from the point of view of national patriots, any form of integration with Russia is detrimental to the independence of Kazakhstan, independence and integration with Russia are incompatible concepts. This means for national patriots that unionist nationalism in any form is unacceptable for independent Kazakhstan.

Since autumn 2012, there has been some change in Kazakhstan's policy regarding integration in the post-Soviet space. If in the past there were almost no contradictions in relations between Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation (at least, they were publicly expressed), then since October 2012, in the implementation of the integration project of the Eurasian Economic Union, Kazakhstan's disagreement with the proposals put forward by Russia to create some supranational bodies has been revealed such as Eurasian Parliament.

In the summer of 2012, Russia put forward the idea of the Eurasian Parliament as a supranational institution of the Eurasian Economic Union. However, in October of the same year, Maulen Ashimbayev, the Chairman of the Mazhilis Committee for External Relations, said in Moscow that Kazakhstan did not support the idea of a Eurasian Parliament and would not enter it. In the republic, as noted by Nezavisimaya Gazeta, the idea of the Eurasian Parliament was received with hostility, considering it an attempt on state sovereignty [19]. The head of state outlined the framework and conditions for Kazakhstan's participation in integration projects, indicating in December 2012 that issues of the country's political sovereignty were not discussed, and therefore any act that would threaten our independence would lead to the fact that we would withdraw from such an association.

This statement by Nursultan Nazarbayev caused an unpleasant surprise in Russia - they are used to seeing him as a consistent supporter of integration. As Russian journalist Mikhail Rostovsky notes, Moscow is amazed at the unexpected change in Nursultan Nazarbayev's attitude towards the USSR. This once desperately fighting for the preservation of a single state, the politician suddenly declared Kazakhstan "a former col-

ony of the Soviet Union” [20]. The journalist had in mind Nazarbayev’s speech at a business forum in Istanbul in October 2012 during his visit to Turkey, where the president said: “We live in the homeland of the entire Turkic people. After the last Kazakh Khan was killed in 1861, we were a colony of the Russian Empire, and then the Soviet Union. For 150 years, Kazakhs almost lost their national traditions, customs, language, religion. With the help of the Almighty, we proclaimed our independence in 1991. The Turkish state was the first to rejoice for our independence, to recognize our independence. Our people will never forget this” [21].

Conclusion

The most important foreign policy imperative of strengthening and expanding relations with Russia as a strategic ally of Kazakhstan contributed to the dominance of Kazakhstani identity in the structure of Kazakhstan’s national identity. However, among the national-patriotic circles, the pro-Russian course of the authorities aroused discontent, accusations of great concessions to the Russian language and culture and oblivion of Kazakhstan’s national interests during integration ties with Russia.

The changes in geopolitical situation in the post-Soviet space, caused by the neo-imperial foreign policy of Russia, influenced both Kazakhstan-Russia relations and the national identity of Kazakhstan. The perception of Russia in the minds of the masses and elites of Kazakhstan has become much more complicated, carrying contradictory definitions of Russia both as a friend and as a threat. This directly affected the national identity of Kazakhstan, in which the elements of Kazakh identity were strengthened, and in the country’s foreign policy there are more distinct features of national interests that do not always coincide with the interests of Russia.

The 2017 Decree of President Nazarbayev on the transition of the Kazakh language to the Latin alphabet has acquired an important symbolic meaning in Kazakh-Russian relations and the formation of the national identity of Kazakhstan. With the entry of Kazakhstan and Russia into a new decade of their relations, one should expect that they will continue within the framework of the trends that developed in the 2010s. This means a decrease in the ideologization of Kazakhstan - Russia relations in the spirit of unionist nationalism and an increase in pragmatic and rational ties between the two countries based on their national interests.

The analysis of the impact of Kazakhstan - Russia relations in the post-Soviet era on national identity of Kazakhstan demonstrates the evo-

lutionary nature of the formation of this identity. During the first two decades, unionist nationalism dominated in relations between Kazakhstan and Russia, that gave the relations of these countries an ideologized origin in the spirit of the Soviet rhetoric of “friendship of peoples”. The gradual increase of Kazakhs makes the government vulnerable for the position and challenge towards Kazakh language status strengthening that is natural process for the next generation by and large.

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