

THE CONCEPT OF IDENTITY AND ITS THEORETICAL ASPECTS

Karimov Kakhramon

*Head of Department, Central Election Commission of the
Republic of Uzbekistan*

Abstract. This article provides a theoretical and analytical examination of the meaning and essence of the concept of identity, the specific features of its formation, and its theoretical foundations. In particular, it explores the place of identity as a category within the social sciences and humanities, as well as its significance in expressing an individual's self-awareness, sense of belonging to a particular social group, and relationship with society. The article also examines the social, cultural, and political dimensions of identity, the factors influencing its formation, and the interrelationship between individual and collective identity. On this basis, it seeks to develop a theoretical understanding of the phenomenon of identity and to systematize the principal approaches to its study and the criteria used for its analysis.

Keywords: identity, national identity, social identity, political identity, collective identity, self-awareness, social belonging, cultural values, theoretical approaches.

The contemporary world is experiencing a constantly changing geopolitical environment and ongoing political transformations. In this context, questions concerning national identity and its preservation are becoming increasingly important. Arab states, which possess a rich cultural and historical heritage, find themselves at the intersection of their traditions and contemporary challenges. Under conditions of rapid change, this situation raises important questions about the preservation of spiritual and cultural values. National identity plays a significant role in shaping peoples' collective sense of self.

In the context of contemporary international politics, which is becoming increasingly globalized, national identity is of considerable importance in shaping states' approaches on the world stage. Globalization and cultural change are placing spiritual and cultural values under pressure. This, in turn, highlights the need for an in-depth analysis of the conceptual and theoretical dimensions of national identity, as well as the genesis, evolution, and transformation of its formation.

A conceptual and theoretical examination of national identity reflects the complex processes through which it is formed, expressed, and interpreted under contemporary conditions. According to the political realism associated with Thomas Hobbes and Hans Morgenthau¹, national belonging serves to strengthen independence and protect state

interests. At present, the theories and concepts developed by leading scholars such as Samuel Huntington, Edward Said, Bassam Tibi, Fouad Ajami, and Sati‘ al-Husri²—including the clash of civilizations, Orientalism, Arab nationalism, and Arab political thought—provide theoretical foundations for the study of national identity in Arab countries.

The 1990s witnessed the emergence of a process of globalisation that took the form of Western liberalism and involved attempts to replace universal human values. Globalisation, in turn, is understood here as entailing restrictions on state sovereignty in the interests of international organizations. Advocates of globalisation have sought to introduce particular models of democracy, human rights, and civil society regardless of the distinctive characteristics of other independent states and communities, their historical roots, or their aspirations for revival and independence. Factors shaping political identity include external influences originating in Western countries and directed towards promoting European values.

The discourse of identity is a concept in which one term is used to explain another. The word “identification” conveys the ideas of “existence” and “essence.” At the same time, “existence” is associated with “development” and “becoming,” while “essence” itself is grounded in “stability” and “difference.” Only essence, however, possesses distinctive characteristics. In recent times, the discourse of identity has receded in the face of cultural expansion and its considerable political and informational capabilities. This discourse has adopted a defensive position based on the foundations of cultural identity. The Syrian scholar Burhan Ghalioun³ once observed: “Unlike the present period, identity previously expressed itself through national discourse. It is now clear that nationalism has merged with cultural discourse. Today, culture, in its national form, has begun to occupy a position superior to politics.”

National identity is a complex, multi-layered phenomenon encompassing cultural, historical, political, and social dimensions. Traditional approaches to national distinctiveness, such as ethnocentrism and cultural determinism, emphasize internal factors that shape a sense of belonging to a nation and the desire for self-determination. In an era of global interdependence, contemporary approaches incorporate transnational, plural, and multicultural dimensions into the understanding of national identity. The concept of political identification highlights the influence of state power on the construction of individual identity through the use of symbols, religion, rituals, and historical narratives. From this perspective, national identity is used to legitimize political authority and foster social consensus.

The conceptual and theoretical dimensions of national identity reveal the complexity and multidimensional nature of this phenomenon. Different approaches make it possible to

understand national identity as a dynamic phenomenon that interacts with politics, international relations, and individual identity. Understanding national identity is essential for analysing and anticipating states' behaviour in the contemporary world, as well as for understanding the dynamic political changes taking place on the global stage⁴.

It should be noted that religion plays an important role in the formation and expression of national identity. Religious identity can serve not only as a factor of social cohesion but also as a source of conflict when religious differences contradict other dimensions of identity. Religious identity is significant in Arab countries. In this regard, the Middle East and North Africa are home to Islamic communities (Sunni, Shia, and Ibadi), Christian communities (Orthodox, Catholic, and Maronite), and Jewish communities. All these religious groups play an important role in shaping national identity in Arab countries. The interaction between religious and national identity, alongside ethnic identity, can foster unity and solidarity; however, it can also generate tensions and conflicts, particularly where religious differences are perceived as a threat to national cohesion.

National identity is used to mobilize public support for political purposes. State and non-state political actors actively influence national identity by creating and reinforcing perceptions of internal and external threats that may serve as catalysts for mobilizing and uniting society. It is important to emphasize, however, that this goal-oriented process can be constructive, contributing to national unity, or destructive, intensifying conflict and social division.

The mass media play a central role in the formation and dissemination of identity. Digital platforms make it possible to create and share national narratives, shape public opinion, and influence how people perceive the world. However, the digital environment can also become a source of misinformation, stereotypes, and negative perceptions of other peoples⁵. Accordingly, the role of the mass media and social networks in shaping national identity requires particular attention and analysis in order to understand how they influence the construction and interpretation of national narratives.

Globalization has brought the issue of national identity to the fore, leading to the blending of cultures, the expansion of cultural contacts, and the reassessment of identity. Despite global trends, some countries seek to preserve their cultural distinctiveness and national identity. Others, by contrast, engage actively with global culture and its influences, creating a mixture of cultural elements⁶. In this regard, national identity can be said to be closely linked to international security and to constitute one of the factors that strengthen international stability. Nevertheless, interaction among different national identities within the international system may lead to both cooperation and rejection. Conflicts rooted in

national identity can arise when the interests of different nations clash and compete with one another.

In theoretical terms, a national movement cannot be opposed to religion. In fact, it cannot be entirely secular either. At times, it has succeeded because it has been influenced by spontaneous experiments, exceptional circumstances, and the chaotic aspirations of those who have gained control over power and culture and opposed political tendencies, ultimately undermining religious movements oriented towards resisting external aggression and consolidating such resistance.

The aforementioned “cultural” aggression was directed against both religion and nationalism. It sought to preserve theoretical backwardness and prevent national movements from drawing appropriate lessons from the mistakes of national regimes, the victories of Western imperialism over the Eastern bloc, and the defeats of the Non-Aligned Movement. At the same time, it is clear that this process sought to redraw the world map, erasing the map established after the Second World War.

On the basis of the foregoing, the following conclusions may be drawn:

Globalization, migration, changes in social norms and gender roles, and the challenges posed by religious extremism exert additional influence on national identity. National identity is dynamic and may change in response to social, cultural, political, and economic transformations. Islam plays a central role in shaping Saudi national identity, presenting itself as the cultural, religious, and ideological foundation of society. Religious norms and traditions interact with contemporary changes and challenges, creating a distinctive synthesis within the country’s identity. Young people play an important role in shaping the national identity of the future. The mass media, education, art, and cultural expressions serve as important instruments for forming and disseminating national identity. They create symbols, norms, and values that strengthen a sense of community and belonging.

References

1. Ajami, F. *The Dream Palace of the Arabs: A Generation’s Odyssey*. Pantheon Books, 1998, p. 348.
2. Bially Mattern, J. “The Power Politics of Identity.” *European Journal of International Relations*, 2001, Vol. 7, No. 3.
3. “Political Theory and Historiography: A Reply to Professor Skinner on Hobbes.” *The Historical Journal*, 1979, Vol. 33, No. 4, pp. 931–940.
4. Tibi, B. *Arab Nationalism: Between Islam and the Nation-State*. Palgrave Macmillan, London, 1997, p. 365.

5. Huntington, S. The Clash of Civilizations. Moscow: AST Publishing House, 2003, 603 pp. [Originally published in Russian as Столкновение цивилизаций.]
6. Said, E. Orientalism. St Petersburg: Russkiy Mir, 2005, 141 pp. [Originally published in Russian as Ориентализм.]
7. Kaddur, A. M. "Dialogue of Civilizations as a Calling." In: Collection of Articles in Honour of Professor N. Kiribaev's 85th Birthday. Moscow: RUDN University, 2007, p. 116.
8. Pozdnyakov, E. L. "The Concept of National Interest." In: National Interests: Theory and Practice. Moscow, 1991.
9. Torogeldieva, B. M. "The Formation of Civic Identity in a Multi-Ethnic Kyrgyzstani Society." Development of Territories, 2017, No. 1(7).

