

Importance of Inter-Civilizational and Intra-Civilizational Dialogue in National State Consolidation and Development

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The paper presents the main ideas expressed by the author at two international conferences: “The Multi-Polar World XXI. The search for balance” (Nur-Sultan, Kazakhstan, held on 25-26 April 2019) and “Interconnectivity in Central Asia: Challenges and new Opportunities” (Tashkent, Uzbekistan, held on 19-20 February 2019), and deals with the issues of the necessity of dialogue and mutual understanding between different civilizational layers in national States and in inter-State relations.

The proposed material on the topic of how different States manage the problem of inter-civilizational and intra-civilizational conflicts is based upon historical legacy and contemporary events and trends. After presenting the concise theoretical and conceptual foundations of what constitutes major conflict configurations in modern State, the issue of the different paths to managing conflict is given. Two countries are examined, Ukraine and Uzbekistan, the results indicate the need for social and political diversity as a mechanism for dampening conflict, rather than trying to enforce homogeneity.

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Introduction

This paper presents the main ideas expressed by the author at two international conferences: “The Multi-Polar World XXI. The search for balance”, organised by the International Center for Geopolitical Forecasting “East-West” and held on 25-26 April 2019 in Nur-Sultan, the Republic of Kazakhstan [Conference program, 2019], and “Interconnectivity in Central Asia: Challenges and new Opportunities”, convened under United Nations auspices, and held on 19-20 February 2019 in Tashkent, the Republic of Uzbekistan [Conference on regional security, 2019].

In acute conflict situations (both open or latent), attempts to address complex political issues can often be undertaken using either “Aesopian language” or theoretical formulas with incomplete empirical explanations and limiting oneself to only a few hints at certain selective historical circumstances.

Without going into the details of theoretical work related to the definition of the concept of “civilization”, it may be noted that in the context of this paper, civilizations are understood as being social formations localized in space and time, possessing an essential specificity of social, economic, cultural, political and spiritual life.

Some elements of the general theoretical framework and some aspects of the contemporary Ukrainian case

Civilizations, which are understood in this way can exist (a) in the form of territorially rooted social and spiritual formations (entities) with a clear political and economic institutionalization, or be (b) in a dispersed form — as “geographically” (territorially) not rooted or as insufficiently rooted formations (entities).

The most important features of each civilization are manifested: (a) in cultural traditions; (b) in the general world perception of the past, present and future, and in the vision of their own place in the socio-historical process; (c) and in the spiritual and mystical dimension — in the sensation of a close connection with their own (collective) Guardian Spirits, the guides of the will of the Higher Forces in our earthly world — living incarnations of divine entities, prophets, saints and heroes.

To illustrate this point, and based on the modern experience of Ukraine, one can indicate the following civilizational strata that actively manifest themselves in the political process of the country (without going into the details of distinguishing between pure types and mixed types):

1. Isolationist ethnic nationalists.
2. “Euro-Ukrainians”, who in fact, are focused on somehow getting dissolved in the pan-European (Western and Central European) and trans-Atlantic world as executors of the role of hopefully equal, but realistically — junior partners, local managers or decently paid labourers.
3. The post-Soviet civilizational conservatives-multiculturalists in their two main historical and cultural forms [Yakushik, 2006: 385] which in the past have been antagonistic to each other:
 - purely Soviet (“red”) and
 - imperial (pre-Soviet) and “white” (anti-Soviet), in its banner’s conventional colour scheme — a combination not of red, blue and white (as in the pre-revolutionary and the current official Russian Federation’s tricolour), but in the colour composition of the imperial white-yellow-black tricolour. (Many other variations of historical colours of national, regional, local and corporate banners may also be superimposed on this). The discourse of each of these conservative varieties contains strong elements of the concept of “the triune Eastern Slavic people”, and/or usually also of the concept of “the strategic Slavic-Turkic civilizational alliance”.
4. Various tribalists and irredentists, oriented on getting, in one form or another, under the protection of more powerful “tribesmen” or kin nations.

The relationships between such heterogeneous civilizational strata, which do not always have an explicit territorial fixation (in the form of a clear hegemony in a certain region or in a local territorial community), may be structured in the following four basic configurations:

1. Various tactical and strategic alliances between specific civilizational strata and their different internal components while forming in the State and society the cultural and political hegemony of any of these entities (alliances). Often, such alliances between strategically competing, but tactically cooperative “pure” types of civilizational forces lead to the emergence of specific mixed types, essentially “centaurs” and “chimeras”, as, for example, in the case of the union of radical ethno-nationalists and liberal national-democrats — “Euro-Ukrainians”).
2. Various configurations of battles in the Hobbesian “war of all against all” (“*bellum omnium contra omnes*”) between opposing civilizational strata and their internal factions.
3. Temporary “reconciliation”, “coercion to peace and to peaceful coexistence” imposed from outside (for example, modelled on Bosnia-Herzegovina case).
4. Achieving national consensus and State reintegration.

The role of “external attractors” is very important in this, guaranteeing the use of an optimal model for resolving inter-civilizational and intra-civilizational conflicts and acting as a source of both practical knowledge and skills and the necessary additional material resources.

Institutional and regulatory schemes (strategies) for resolving such conflicts (both inter-civilizational and intra-civilizational) can be present in the form of such basic variations:

1. The establishment of one or another form of rigid hegemony of one of the sides of civilizational confrontation (for example, in Latvia and Estonia after 1991, and in Ukraine in 2014-2019).
2. A soft hegemony of one of the civilizational strata, with an orientation towards preserving civilizational pluralism within the State and in the society as a whole, but with possible and not unreasonable and nor groundless accusations of trying to apply “anesthesia” to opponents, companions and partners during the foreseen subsequent transition to the “euthanasia” stage.
3. Civilizational pluralism in the framework of the preservation of acute competitive forms of the search for the State and the society development path.
4. Civilizational pluralism with the consolidation of a certain reasonable and stable compromise and with the peaceful coexistence and even often the symbiosis of various civilizational strata and their territorially fixed communities (as typical examples may be taken the contemporary Switzerland and Canada).
5. The launch of the “civilized divorce” scenario (Czechoslovakia in 1992-1993, Montenegro’s withdrawal from the confederative state union with Serbia in 2006; modern Catalonia, Brexit, etc.).
6. “Uncivilized forms of divorce” (Yugoslavia after 1991; separatist and irredentist movements in the territory of a number of post-Soviet States, etc.).

Some elements of present-day Uzbekistan’s political experience

In official documents of policy significance in present-day Uzbekistan, a considerable amount of attention is paid to the problems of international cooperation in the cultural and humanitarian spheres. In addition to traditional areas and forms of such cooperation (the development of tourism [On measures], mutual familiarization with cultural achievements, performances of creative

teams, diversified relations between sister cities,¹ etc.), for the States embarking on the path of accelerated and balanced development and a comprehensive and healthy integration in all major areas of the modern global society, there is a fundamentally important role of the programmes of cooperation with the special bodies of foreign countries and international organizations that promote institutional knowledge and skills transfer.

When the major features (the type and level) of administrative culture and management culture in the post-Soviet (and especially Central Asian) societies are assessed in an objective and unbiased way, the important tasks in various interrelated planes become quite clear. A famous long-standing methodologically important remark about the “crude types” of archaic culture impeding the successful development has not lost its relevance: “For a start, we should be satisfied with real bourgeois culture; for a start we should be glad to dispense with the crude types of pre-bourgeois culture, i.e., bureaucratic culture or serf culture, etc.” [Lenin, 1965: 487].

First of all, it is the task of the formation and consolidation of the modern national identity, which implies a multi-level and multidimensional self-identification of an individual (and especially of an actor in the sphere of administration and management) as a representative of his/her State, his/her ethnos and a group of kin and/or closely inter-related peoples, his/her territorial community, his/her spiritual, historical and cultural-political community, and a certain cultural political area). In this respect, the President of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev spoke clearly: “... we need to deeply understand our own national identity, study ancient and rich history of our Homeland, strengthen the research work in this area, and support the scientists, who work in the area of humanities. The evaluation of the past must, of course, be unbiased and, most importantly, free of ideological views” [Address, 2018].

Feeling oneself as a citizen of Uzbekistan, a citizen of the world, and part of the Turkic, and Turkic-Slavic (Turkic-speaking and Russian-speaking) world, part of the Muslim spiritual world and the whole world of Abrahamic spiritual values is a worthy and promising goal, to maintain the balance, avoid extremes, and to use as much as possible the creative potential of a multi-ethnic society and multifaceted contacts with the pluralistic global community. Achieving such a goal is not easy at all, but it is quite possible with the development of multilateral cultural and humanitarian ties with the “outside world”, the prevention of self-isolation, but with a duly reliable national security system, and with a clear strategic vision on the part of the country’s political leadership, the capability to implement both the functions of the administration and real conceptual power.

For this reason, cooperation programmes with various intergovernmental bodies (for example, within the UN and the SCO — the Shanghai Cooperation Organization) and State, quasi-non-State (QUANGO — quasi-autonomous non-governmental) organizations, as well as civic organizations of different countries — centres of the corresponding cultures and civilizations (European continental, Anglo-Saxon, East Slavic, Turkic, Muslim, Chinese and East Asian in general) are very important. The relevant examples at the level of bilateral relations, which have been drawn to our attention during the visit of the President of Uzbekistan to Germany, are the activities of the representative offices of Goethe Institute, Konrad Adenauer and Friedrich Ebert foundations in Uzbekistan and, in particular, deepening of cooperation with Germany in the fields of management and government, transfer to the Uzbek social ground of new knowledge and the advanced elements of the education system, the introduction of the German experience in these areas [Normatov, 2019].

¹ For example, in bilateral cultural and humanitarian relations between Uzbekistan and Germany, these are the links between Tashkent and Berlin, Samarkand and Bremen, Bukhara and Bonn (see: [Normatov, 2019]).

Huge, not fully used so far, potential for cultural and organizational, including managerial, innovations is contained in numerous layers of Uzbek labourers working abroad. It is important to develop cooperation with the State and non-State institutions of the countries hosting Uzbek workers to promote the formation and development of these workers' not only modern professional knowledge and skills, but also their personal experience of real citizenry, which is incompatible with both apathy and apoliticism, on the one hand, and irresponsible adventurism and extremism, on the other. And in this area it is necessary to improve the institutional framework for the cooperation of all the interested parties, including in the study of the relevant experience of various successful countries.

From the huge complex of important and topical issues in this area, it is worthwhile to draw attention to another important idea expressed by the President Shavkat Mirziyoyev, — the establishment of a special Expert Council under the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan which “should include prominent scientists and practitioners from foreign countries” [Address, 2018]. It is important that this would be a non-ideologized, really functioning advisory body within the framework of the country's “conceptual power” mechanisms, with the participation of specialists, intellectual and spiritual authority figures from the countries that have successfully coped with such kind of the tasks that Uzbekistan currently faces.

Conclusions

In resolving inter-civilizational and intra-civilizational tensions and conflicts, the role of the national leaders with a real vision, of authentic statesmen, of the Civil Service (the central State and the municipal bodies' employees) and responsible politicians is of a paramount importance. They must be able to consciously, systematically and efficiently develop and implement strategies related to maintaining the required balance between their country's various civilizational layers. A lot also depends on whether the expert community, in cooperation with politicians and public servants, are able to create advanced centres of “conceptual power”, possessing not only an analytical potential and intuition, but implementation skills also.

Discussion fora are urgently required; the atmosphere of an unbiased, impartial discussion, exchange of creative achievements in the atmosphere of “Brahmanic communication” is needed. Joint research and publications and the popularization of their materials among experts and for the general public are equally important.

In the modern world, with its virtually immeasurable virtual and spiritual space and with a rather comfortable pluralistic socio-political atmosphere and environment, there is enough room for representatives of different currents of thought (and practical action) for their peaceful coexistence and interaction, or in some cases, when specially desired, — for a relatively isolated existence with minimal contacts with other cultural and political communities. It is important that conscious people have the feeling that each of us has no real enemies, but only strategic and/or tactical opponents and competitors, as well as allies, partners, fellow travellers, neighbours, and simply “others” who show their legitimate desire to live alongside or apart from us. The world is vast, diverse and beautiful. There is a place for everyone. The pluralistic harmony of this world must be respected and cherished.

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