
The Experience of the Migration Component of European Identity for the Central Asia Region

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The purpose of the article is to determine the degree of influence of international migration issues on the process of transformation of European identity and to assess the prospects for applying this experience in the countries of Central Asia. The methodological base of the study was built on the basis of a combination of methods of structural-functional, comparative, institutional analysis and forecasting with elements of a descriptive method. The results of the scientific work consist of characterizing the concept of European identity and the main problems of its development in connection with the intensification of migration processes in the world, formulating the features of the incorporation and integration of foreign citizens in the EU states, as well as highlighting the principles and norms used by members of the Commonwealth to regulate migration flows. The materials of this work can be applied in research and applied fields: the article can be useful for scientists whose interests include the formation and development of regional identity in a globalized world, as well as the topics of migration processes and linguistic, cultural and social adaptation of immigrants.

Introduction

In the twenty-first century, globalization has exacerbated the problem of preserving national and cultural identity. Identity in a broad sense involves the awareness of the human community of its real place in the social world, drawing a line between

‘strangers’ and ‘ours and’, establishing a circle of people with whom a person is connected and identifies themselves. On the one hand, globalization is an objective process of creating a global financial and economic space based on modern technologies. On the other hand, globalization is associated with the blurring of national and cultural differences, the destruction of traditions and values inherent in individual peoples, as well as with the universalization of the world (Gandana and Nissa 2021; Doszhan 2023).

Migration flows in the world and the growth of the population, which is approaching eight billion, have a ‘significant impact on instability and the balance of power’, on the adoption of politically motivated decisions by major powers at the international level. Rethinking the arguments proving the movement of the world towards ‘chaos’ in the famous historical and philosophical treatise of S.P. Huntington (1993) again leads to the actual problem of modern migration, one of the causes of which is the consequences of rapid population growth. Predicting the picture of the world after the Cold War, Huntington brought together multiple criteria for possible ‘chaos’ under a question mark. Far from asserting such a development of the world system, he proposed one of the variants of a predictive scenario involving huge masses of the population moving around the world. Appeal to Huntington is substantiated precisely by the methodology of his predictive analysis, as expressed in the title of his work and, from a modern point of view, an evaluation of the conclusion in his final phrase: ‘... clashes of civilizations pose the greatest threat to world peace, and the international order, taking into a reliable measure for the prevention of a world war’.

The example of Western countries is offered to the world as an optimal development model, the principles of democracy of the Western version are declared the best form of political organization, and popular culture is spread as a role model (Singh 2022). It is worth adding that, for countries of the Central Asia (CA) region, the European experience is one of the acceptable democratic, political, and legal public structures of public consent, where tolerance for existing and the formation of new identities is maintained. Representatives of local cultures, drawn into the process of economic globalization, actively defend their identity and do not seek to join Western values. Moving from Africa, the Middle East, and other regions of the world to Europe, immigrants bring with them religion, traditional customs, national cuisine, and language. However, wanting to join the material wealth, they still master the cultural baggage of those states in which they settle (Royuela and López-Bazo 2020; Kadyraliyeva *et al.* 2019). Globalization processes are intensifying over time, facing a tendency to limit or close the national space, so the problem is complicated by many internal and external factors of influence, and pressure on the process of preserving national and cultural identity. The problem cannot currently be solved even with the involvement of international legal norms, but it can be mitigated by the instruments of democratic politics (Musin and Zheksekin 2023). The European Community has these instruments and has a certain experience that should be guided by them. Taking into account the national characteristics of the CA region, such a

landmark can be selective. This is the reason for the scientific and practical relevance of the topic of this study.

The purpose of the article is to determine the degree of influence of international migration issues on the process of transformation of European identity and to assess the prospects for applying this experience in the countries of Central Asia. The object of study is the national and cultural identity in the system of international relations. To achieve the goal, the following tasks were set:

- to define the concept of ‘European identity’;
- to characterize the stages of integration of European states in the cultural and educational sectors;
- to analyse the impact of migration on the formation of European identity;
- to formulate the problems of preserving the national and cultural identity of citizens of the Central Asian states abroad;
- to characterize the prospects for integration in Central Asia and the creation of a regional identity.

Materials and Methods

Using the institutional method, the author was able to consider the activities of the authorities of the EU countries in the field of combating illegal migration, as well as to study the role of European institutions in influencing citizens’ awareness of their own identity through the implementation of various cultural and educational programmes. It also provided an opportunity to study the origins of such phenomena as multiculturalism and cultural pluralism in the social fabric of European society. The comparative method was used to compare the prerequisites for the formation of regional identity in the European Union and Central Asia and to highlight common and distinctive features in terms of the impact of globalization on this process. Emphasis was placed on the problem of migration in its various aspects for the EU and CA. Namely, the European Union is a recipient region, and Central Asia as a whole is a donor region for migrants.

The exception is Kazakhstan, where, along with outgoing migration, in the last decade, the trend of the country accepting ethnic migrants – kandases, ethnic Kazakhs, has dominated. This is evidenced by the statistics of ethnic Kazakhs who arrived and received the status of kandases, a citizen of Kazakhstan. In total, 1.112 million ethnic Kazakhs have returned to the republic since 1991, according to the press service of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Population (Baigenews 2023). For example, in just six months of 2023, more than 8000 kandases returned to their historical homeland. Of these, more than half of the kandases (53.9%) who arrived in Kazakhstan since the beginning of the year are from Uzbekistan; China (19.3%); Russia (13%); Turkmenistan (6.3%); Mongolia (5.3%) and people from other countries (Baigenews 2023). All of them, being ethnic Kazakhs, bring to the Kazakh society the originality of the cultural, and mental

codes of the countries where they were born and where their ancestors lived for several generations. The forecasting method made it possible to outline the main and most likely ways of developing European identity in a post-national direction. In addition, the author managed to predict the prospects for the formation of a regional identity in Central Asia based on a common cultural heritage, religion, historical past, and a system of value orientations by creating a new interstate organization that would include all five countries of the region (Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan).

Empirical data provided an analysis of publications in periodicals, materials of scientific and practical conferences, studies, and reports of international organizations on the issue of migration, official documents, multilateral agreements, and interstate treaties – Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (United Nations 2023) and Global Compact on Refugees (United Nations 2018). In addition, the author used the results of public opinion polls of the sociological service Eurobarometer 98 (European Commission 2023) held in the Commonwealth countries in different years on behalf of the European Commission and other EU institutions. They made it possible to trace the nature of the change in the identity of the EU over a long period of time, to determine the impact of internal and external events on the perception of the population as Europeans and citizens of the EU, as well as to identify the dynamics of public sentiment on specific issues: European integration, EU institutions, and policies, citizenship, and migration.

Results

The Concept of European Identity and the Evolution of its Formation

The integration processes in Europe that began in the 1950s at this stage of historical development have acquired a special character, deepening to an unprecedented level. The EU policy in the field of education, culture, and economy contributes to the maintenance of supranational institutions in public opinion and increases the degree of identification of the population not with states, but with the commonwealth (Figure 1). As evidenced by the results of public opinion polls under the Eurobarometer 98 programme (European Commission 2023), the EU averages for feeling ‘belonging to Europe’ and ‘belonging to the EU’ have almost levelled off.

But now one of the main tasks is still to create a community, the basis of which is a European identity – a common political and economic heritage shared by all citizens of the European Union. Therefore, for the current stage of development of the EU, a single identity is a matter of exceptional importance. It is going about the development of a multi-level model for the coexistence of different peoples and cultures under the common denominator of the EU, the main features of which are multiculturalism and tolerance. It is worth noting that the system of identities is most clearly revealed precisely in the European example since it can be stated that the EU citizen is overloaded with the need for numerous identifications that are not yet

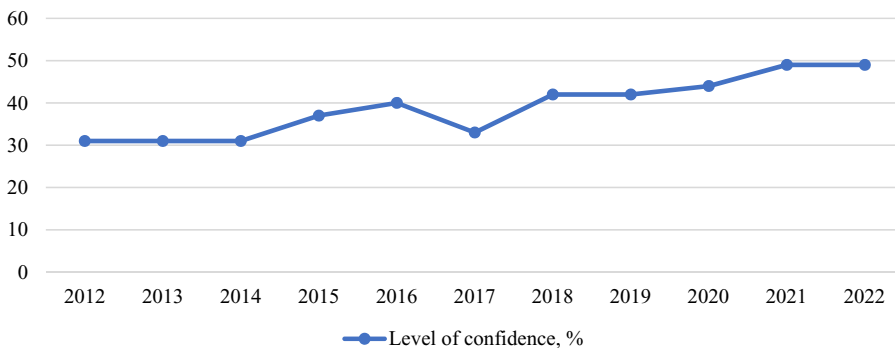


Figure 1. Level of trust in EU institutions.
 Source: Compiled by the authors based on European Commission (2022, 2023).

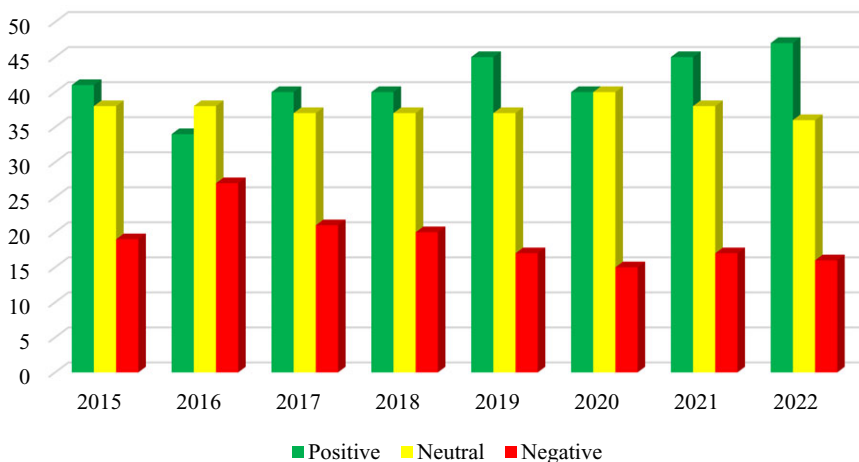


Figure 2. Level of attitude towards the EU – positive, neutral or negative.
 Source: Compiled by the authors based on European Commission (2022, 2023).

clearly structured (Oltra 2021). On the one hand, a significant part of the civil and political activity of a person is connected with the EU. On the other hand, the national-state identity cannot be discarded at the moment. But even with the theoretical assumption of a fundamental transformation, and declining concepts of national identity, European identity is not yet able to replace it. At the same time, the number of those who have positive emotions about the EU is growing, which indicates an increase in the number of Euro-optimists (Figure 2).

Talk about the formation of a European identity as a political course usually boils down to the Declaration of European Identity (European Union 1973). This document states that, despite conflicts and wars in the past, today European countries have common goals and interests, so they were able to create a single organization, the fundamental principles of which are democracy, law, and human rights. In 1984, measures were taken to strengthen the European identity. These

included the mutual recognition of higher education diplomas, the introduction of a single passport in all Commonwealth countries, and the adoption of the EU flag and anthem. At the same time, the policy in this direction was criticized, because, according to experts, it posed a threat to the national identity and culture of the EU member states (Tekiner 2020). At the end of the twentieth and beginning of the twenty-first centuries, the emphasis was placed on the cultural component of the creation of a European identity. And it gave positive results. Efforts to strengthen socio-cultural ties contributed to the spread of European identity not only at the level of elites but also among ordinary citizens (Akaliyski *et al.* 2021). In other words, the goals of the European cultural policy were to bring to the fore the common European cultural heritage, and to increase the sense of ownership of it by every person living in the EU. At the same time, he or she must simultaneously maintain respect for national and religious differences. This approach reflects the fundamental values shared by Europeans (Olsen 2022).

Transformation of European Identity in the Context of Globalization and Rising Levels of Migration

Every year, about 2 million people come to live in the EU, and about 1 million emigrate from the EU. Migration has always been and will always be part of the European identity. Even despite times of crisis, the EU remains attractive to citizens of less economically developed states. Therefore, the presence of migrants from third countries in the European Union has turned from a temporary phenomenon into a fact of everyday life. Together with the positive effect on the labour market, the influx of foreigners brought with it challenges for social stability and security (Regina and de Capitani 2022). In this regard, it became necessary to develop mechanisms for the adaptation of immigrants. In integration programmes, preference is given to people who are economically independent and who speak the language of the host country (European Commission 2020c). Integration is a process that includes both the preservation of the cultural integrity of the group to a certain extent and the desire of the latter to become an integral part of a large community. At the same time, the preservation of cultural identity and adherence to the dominant society take place (see Table 1).

Practice shows that forced migrants, with a history of traumatic resettlement, experience the greatest difficulties in integration, for example refugees from armed conflicts, primarily from Muslim states. Such immigrants find it difficult to expand a narrow repertoire of ethno-religious identity, loyalty to institutions of democratic political governance, and extreme tolerance for many norms that are incompatible with their traditional way of life (European Commission 2020d). Attempts to harmonize interethnic and intercultural relations by introducing a model of liberal multiculturalism in the EU states did not lead to the expected results. This can be explained by the fact that, in practice, the policy was implemented as not so much multiculturalism as ‘multiple monoculturalism’. Stimulation of cultural diversity has

Table 1. Attitude of EU citizens towards the adaptation of immigrants from third countries

	2018	2022
For successful integration, migrants need to . . .	Know the language of the host country, pay taxes, accept the norms and values of the recipient society.	Know the language of the recipient state, contribute to the social security system by paying taxes, and recognize the way of life of the citizens of the host country.
Has your country's policy been successful in integrating migrants? Yes/No/Don't know (%)	54/40/6	42/47/2
Who or what plays the most important role in the adaptation of immigrants?	Immigrants themselves, educational institutions and the government.	Immigrants themselves, educational institutions and employers.
Is the government doing everything possible to accommodate migrants? Yes/No/Don't know (%)	51/39/10	68/27/5

Source: Compiled by the authors based on European Commission (2022, 2023).

led to the renewal of group forms of cultural identity, slowing down the process of individual cultural diversity. It has become profitable for many representatives of ethnic and religious groups to emphasize their exclusivity to receive additional preferences in the framework of minority support programmes. Thus, liberal multiculturalism contributed to the strengthening of the isolation of cultural groups and the increase in the degree of accentuation of ethno-religious identity among migrants (Virgili 2020).

The effectiveness of policy implementation in this area can only be achieved by applying an integrated approach that includes all the main directions of integration policy (European Commission. 2020a). However, it can be stated that in most European countries there are no basic conditions for the formation of the attitudes of the majority of immigrants to adaptation. These conditions include the following (Mukomel 2016):

- accessibility of the most important components of the social environment (employment market, housing, education and social services);
- sociocultural distance between receiving and sending society;
- historically established group experience of survival in a foreign cultural environment;
- the development and accessibility of formal and informal interaction networks for migrants.

At the moment, incorporation is a more effective model for solving the accumulated problems in the polarized societies of Europe and building constructive interaction with immigrants (Tsybukh 2023). Its relevance is associated with the presence of institutionalized enclaves of migrants in almost all major cities of the EU states. Their creation was facilitated by the state programme for the construction of social housing for labour migrants and refugees. At the same time, the social support system was designed to mitigate the initial period of adaptation of newcomers and protect members of the host society from a possible ‘culture shock’ when faced with migrants. However, a short-term positive effect further weakened the motivation of immigrants for integration, primarily economic, and also contributed to the institutionalization of diasporas. An illustrative example is the richest countries of Western Europe (Germany, Belgium, France), where migrants of working age live on social benefits, and do not want to look for work, which greatly complicates the process of adaptation. From this, it is worth concluding that, recently, it is the migration factor that ‘worked’ to weaken the identity of the EU (including the refugee crisis of 2015–2016), the growth of right-wing populist sentiments, and the UK’s withdrawal from the organization (European Commission 2020b). In the future, these processes set the vector for weakening the unity and fragmentation of the European Union, which can only be countered by strengthening trust and solidarity within the Commonwealth. Therefore, Brussels will inevitably have to reconsider not only individual components of the common European identity but also rethink its relationship with migration issues in the context of strengthening security.

Prospects for Integration of the Central Asian Countries in the Context of the Formation of Regional Identity

In different regions of the world, integration has acquired a steady trend. Globalization has intensified the competition of economies, which has forced countries to consolidate their efforts. Central Asia, with its rich natural resources and important geographic location, is increasingly turning into a centre of intertwining interests of world powers. The complexity of the entry of the Central Asian states into world politics can be explained by several factors, including the lack of proper experience and the need for constant balancing between various centres of power (Alieva 2015). The problem of regional integration of the CA countries against the background of the intensification of bilateral relations between them is again becoming relevant. So, in all five states, the same political and economic trends that formed after the collapse of the USSR can be traced; all Central Asian countries face significant development challenges that are best addressed through regional integration. Some of these issues are inherently transboundary in nature (water supply, energy, transport, and the threat of terrorism) and therefore necessitate regional cooperation at a higher level.

In the current conditions of unstable world order, the CA countries tend to be more united, with closer cooperation and regional interaction. More meaningful prospects for Central Asian integration are emerging again. Indeed, the CA countries

are closely connected geographically, culturally, and ethnically, so regional cohesion emerges as a dominant trend. This is evidenced by regular meetings at the highest state level and working consultations at the level of relevant ministries, mutual exchange of specialists, as well as an increase in the rate of labour migration in the region. In addition, educational and scientific migration has become more active. At the same time, so has illegal migration (Alieva 2015). Also, the interaction between countries is important in the context of the formation of a single community. Central Asia has not yet taken advantage of the historical chance to actualize its identity. This refers to the ability to form unity within the region through cultural integration.

Despite the common historical origins, territorial proximity, and common values, many differences specify factors of regional identity. However, now there is a tendency to develop the ideology of each of the CA states, based on historical heritage. In forming the development strategy of the region, it is expedient to correlate the main points of contact, and fundamental values, which will become the basis for the coordinated work of regional structures in this industry. The political elites of the CA states need to realize the fact that only consolidation based on regional identity and common interests can guarantee sustainable socio-economic development of the region in the context of globalization. This, in turn, will help reduce the level of emigration and turn CA into an attractive region for foreign investment. Integration is possible based on European experience. This involves the creation of a free trade area, and the creation of a common market, economic and monetary union, while developing common living standards (Aspandiyar and Nurdavletova 2022). After that, it is necessary to take a course towards the formation of a political community of the CA countries.

Discussion

Scientists from different countries, in one way or another, formed the value significance of Europe, justifying the direct dependence of world development on the development of this region. And, if looking at the political history of mankind, then Europe has always played an important role in determining the trends in the transformation of various spheres of public life. At the same time, it should be noted that, in recent history, it was Europe that was the first to create a successful association – the European Union. Therefore, the European experience is of scientific interest in matters of integration, the formation of regional identity, and the impact of migration phenomena on these processes. Thus, the Spanish researchers Royuela and López-Bazo (2020) made a theoretical overview of the concept of ‘European identity’ and analysed the main directions of the so-called cohesion policy. Scholars have concluded that in the last few decades, the concept of forming a European identity has been purposefully implemented in the EU. Citizens of Commonwealth countries develop a collective identity through two main mechanisms: information and experience. In addition, the identification of a person

with Europe is due to the presence of cultural and educational programmes that influence the daily life of citizens and involve them in the construction of this identity.

G. Aleknonis (2021) considers, in his research work, European identity from different points of view. He concludes that residents of EU states perceive themselves differently. This is evidenced by public opinion polls conducted between 2004 and 2020. In addition, European identity is questionable by various political players, primarily at the national level of the EU member states. At the same time, the author argues that European identity is constantly in transformation. It was most influenced by such events as the large-scale enlargement of the EU in 2004, the constitutional referendums, the economic crises of the last decades, and the UK's exit from the organization (Brexit). This topic is also in the field of view of Noversa (2022). In the course of his study, he concludes that at the moment there is no clear understanding of European identity among the scientific community. The author tends to think that the identity of the EU countries is formed, first, based on the cultural components, values, and collective experience. The creation of a cultural community in the EU, in his opinion, should not consist of the universalization of these values, but in the attraction of reflective practices that could create a unique political and civic culture in Europe.

Italian explorers Carillo *et al.* (2023) use their country as an example to study how immigrants are integrated into the EU and how this affects their subsequent employment. The researchers conclude that assimilation into the host society does not necessarily provide a clear advantage in the labour market compared with immigrants who identify only with their original ethnic group. The researchers also state the fact that integration is more beneficial for immigrant workers, who usually face stronger barriers to entry into the labour market. It concerns women with low qualifications, and migrants who lack work experience. The issue of cultural integration of immigrants in the European Union is studied by Giovanis and Akdede (2023). They compared the frequency of attendance and reasons for non-attendance at cultural events between natives and immigrants based on public opinion polls. Among the reasons for non-participation in the cultural life of the host country, scientists highlight the lack of interest and financial difficulties. Therefore, the economic integration of migrants can be a major driver of cultural participation and adaptation (Yareмова and Mytrofanova 2022). In addition, they concluded that the longer an immigrant lives in a new state, the more often he or she attends cultural events.

Some aspects of the regulatory environment in EU policy and its experience of multiculturalism for multinational Kazakhstan were studied by Gubaidullina and Ixanova (2021). These authors are inclined to believe that the European policy on migration, and on the integration of immigrants from Central Asian countries, determines the most effective methods for preserving the current language situation and for regulating the interaction of ethnic groups in the economic and social life of the EU. The policy is aimed at strengthening the dialogue of cultures, the preservation of cultural heritage, and the wide dissemination of common European values. This approach is also relevant for the Kazakh multinational society, so that tolerance, equality of ethnic groups, and cultural pluralism become the norm of

everyday life. If talking about the topic of migration in Central Asia, then Western scientists study it. Finke et al. (2013) explore mobility and identity in CA. They conclude that the processes of globalization have affected the ways and purposes of moving the inhabitants of the region. Among the main reasons for emigration since the beginning of the 1990s, researchers identify moving to find work and repatriation to new sovereign nation-states. However, the first reason is now the predominant one. Immigrants from CA countries try to maintain their national identity through the use of traditions and cultural elements. At the same time, it is not about regional identity here. In addition, the authors do not study the possibility of applying the European experience to the region regarding migration, and the integration of immigrants from Central Asian countries.

Here, it is possible to conclude that the integration of Central Asia, following the example of the European Union, is quite possible. The institutions of state power of the countries of the region need to focus on the socio-economic component of cooperation to stop the emigration of the able-bodied population and return citizens to their homeland (Larikova 2022). The formation of a regional identity based on the implementation of cultural and educational programmes will become a secondary task on the path of integration. It is also worth noting that, at the moment, there is not a single organization that would unite all the countries of Central Asia. The formation of such an alliance can contribute to the further rapprochement of states.

Conclusions

The second half of the twentieth century was distinguished by the intensification of integration processes within Europe, which led to the creation of such a large-scale project as the European Union. Successful integration of economies and the formation of effectively functioning supranational governing bodies led to a significant convergence of the states of the Commonwealth, which prompted a deepening of interaction in the cultural and educational sectors. And this, in turn, contributed to the formation of a European identity. At the same time, the citizens of the EU countries still identify themselves with their nation-states. However, the concept of multiculturalism and the unification of the system of values contribute to the formation of a single European community. The formation of a European identity will continue in a constructivist vein since it is through this creation that the supporters of European integration thought and continue to think about the creation of a united Europe.

If talking about the migration component of the formation of European identity, then a clear position on this issue has been developed in the Commonwealth countries. If there is an inability or unwillingness of migrants to adapt to new conditions of work and life, to take into account the life order of the titular population of the recipient countries, then xenophobia may arise, and the activity of nationalist parties and public organizations, calling for the protection of national identity, may increase. To level the above threats, the host states of the European

Union are trying to respond to the trend of splitting society by integrating migrants and including them in a single social space. At the same time, immigrants are guaranteed equal rights and opportunities with all citizens for political, economic, and any other participation in the life of the recipient country. The experience of the EU can serve as an example for the integration of the Central Asian countries, primarily for economic growth and development in various sectors of social life. On the one hand, the success of economic regionalism should strengthen the consciousness of belonging to one civilization. On the other hand, economic regionalism can be successful only if it is rooted in the commonality of civilization.

In conclusion, the objectives of this study, aimed at investigating the impact of international migration on the transformation of European identity and exploring the potential application of this experience in Central Asian countries, have been successfully achieved. This research has provided valuable insights into the complex relationship between international migration and identity transformation in Europe. Additionally, it has explored how these insights could be relevant and beneficial to Central Asian countries. As they pursue their paths of integration and development, Central Asian nations can draw inspiration from Europe's experiences and adapt them to these nations' unique contexts. The development of a regional identity in Central Asia, grounded in shared values and economic regionalism, holds promise for fostering a sense of belonging and unity among nations in the region. As Central Asian countries continue their journey of evolution and engagement with the global community, the preservation of national and cultural identities, alongside the cultivation of a regional identity, will play pivotal roles in their success in the twenty-first century.

Deepening cooperation between the CA states will contribute to the formation of a regional identity. After all, there are more than enough prerequisites for this. In particular, since ancient times, Central Asia has been a single cultural and historical zone, where for many centuries there was a single political space, including during the existence of the Russian Empire and the USSR. In addition to geographical proximity, cultural, spiritual and religious ties, the countries of the region have a common history. The above circumstances affect the rapprochement of states in various sectors, which will strengthen cultural security and counter the challenges associated with the imposition of alien cultural and civilizational values on the peoples of Central Asia. The prospect for further scientific research on this topic is a detailed study of the experience of other regions of the world in the context of the formation and development of identity through the deepening of integration processes. In addition, this work can be used to study the problems of migrant integration in a globalized world, and labour can also become a starting point for considering integration phenomena in Central Asia in various aspects at the current stage of historical development.

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