

# **NATIONAL IDENTITY IN THE AGE OF GLOBALISATION: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF HISTORICAL, CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS ASPECTS IN ASIAN COUNTRIES**

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## **1. Introduction**

Thanks to historical heritage, traditions and the features of everyday life, which were revered and preserved across generations, and religious beliefs, and formed the basis for emotional resilience and stability, conditions were created for the emergence of a state founded on the idea of national self-awareness, commonality, and unity. Asia, a region considered the most diverse in terms of history, religion, culture, political development, and economic and social conditions, was also the place where national identity developed through various paths and directions (for example, through colonisation and the imposition of French traditions in Cambodia in the 19th century, or through the independent development of Thailand) [1-2]. The issue of identity remained highly relevant and widely discussed at all levels of national governance, since under globalisation processes and rapid transformations of the world order, boundaries, and barriers were being erased and became less defined in the legal understanding of the subject.

Given the challenges and threats of the third millennium, preserving national uniqueness and ideology in the 21st century has been critically important and necessary. New technologies, the rise of some states over others (creating preconditions for conflict) has required adequate action and a measured approach in international interactions, while also taking into account national potential and needs. Therefore, it is especially important to consider all the components and elements of the issue of national identity, particularly in Asian countries, to produce the most comprehensive and wide-ranging results for subsequent use in the context of sustainable development of the nation-state.

The concept of identity, as a philosophical category, can not be defined narrowly or specifically, which, according to G. Grimalda et al. [3], makes the process of self-discovery and the individual an exceptionally important moment in virtually all human actions. The phenomena that defined the national character of statehood formation in Asia, as well as the creation of national-state structures in countries of the region, were, according to I. Konjak and I. Chebi [4], based from the outset on ethnic identity, commonality, and similarity of the peoples who lived there. The religious component of national policy to strengthen state identity was one of the key elements for its independent

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and successful existence in the international arena; and Y. Buribayev et al. [5] believed that the actions carried out by the Republic of Kazakhstan in protecting religion and integrating it wisely into domestic affairs provided a fairly successful example of a strategy to reinforce national identity.

According to K. Annet [6], cultural identity – as a direction of a state's national self-determination – not only had to be studied but also preserved in various forms, adapted to new conditions and challenges of the times, and, moreover, transformed for specific purposes and tasks. Globalisation processes, occurring on all continents, have actively affected Asian countries, as this region is where the largest number of highly developed advanced states is concentrated. This, according to O. Musayev et al. [7], provided an opportunity to observe in real time how these countries were transforming under the new conditions of the 21st century, combining innovative technologies with traditional customs that would ultimately define their national identity.

According to S. Almasbek and M. Bidas [8], the spiritual heritage of a nation played a defining role in shaping its identity and formed a set of values necessary for the existence of a viable social state based on the principles of solidarity and unity of its citizens. The level of religious development, according to E. Burova et al. [9], served as an important marker of personal self-identification and an indicator for identifying all social processes in the state. This level was extremely difficult to maintain at adequate levels without a strong national idea that united society.

National identity had decisive significance for a state's readiness to be an active player on the international stage, to strengthen its subjectivity, and to claim rights to certain phenomena, events, or historical connections. Its foundational elements were: religion – which, according to E. Baltar Rodriguez [10], united the nation under a shared spiritual foundation; culture – which, in the opinion of S. Rahman et al. [11], formed the collective memory of the nation; and history – the study of which could significantly assist a country in forming a national idea [12]. One insufficiently explored aspect in the literature was the detailed overview of how the first nation states initially emerged in Asian territories, particularly considering the strength and intensity of the influence of the European colonial powers who shaped the formation of early nation-states through their cultural, religious, and social practices at that time.

The aim of the study was to examine the specific features and key trends in the formation and development of the phenomenon of national identity in Asia through a comparative analysis of the cultural, historical and religious characteristics of state formation under conditions of a globalised transformation of the world order. The research tasks included defining the basic criteria and characteristics of the concept of “national identity” to enable accurate evaluation of the phenomenon under conditions of rapid evolutionary changes on a global scale; studying the features of the formation and development of state and national self-determination in selected Asian countries; and developing recommendations for a general assessment of the current state and development prospects of national self-awareness in the Asian region.

## 2. Materials and methods

To study the specific features of national identity in Asian countries, various research methods were applied. Using a systems analysis approach, general traits and frameworks of the subject were formulated: terms, concepts, definitions, core theories and facts. Moreover, in the context of the subjects examined in the study, it was emphasised that, since Asia includes numerous countries – around 50 (internationally recognised by the United Nations and self-proclaimed or proto-state formations) – the main

analysis was carried out through the study of the Central Asian states, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan.

Using the statistical method, the interconnection between past events and the current situation was examined in the context of the processes of self-determination and independent development of the Asian states. To analyse the current dynamics in the sphere of national self-determination, the overall level of globalisation (components of stable development in the economic, political and social sectors) was studied, as well as the directions and approaches to self-identity (personal and social), with particular emphasis on linguistic and religious diversity.

By applying the historical method, events and situations were studied – such as the resolution of interethnic conflicts within individual states, confrontations based on religious disputes, monitoring of extremist sentiments and radical movements in the region – which influenced, to varying degrees, the formation of the foundations of national identity in these countries and were later used in the development of statehood based on a unified ideology.

Using the comparative method, the processes of internal political transformation and changes in approaches to understanding each country's role in the new world order were compared, specifically those that took place in the countries under study during the collapse of the Soviet Union and the period of independent development of young republics – from the late 1980s to the 2020s of the 21st century (based on the example of the Central Asian countries, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan).

As part of the application of the legal acts analysis method, national and international documents were reviewed, containing relevant information and developments (plans, strategies, roadmaps) concerning the development of principles of national identity: Address by the president of the Republic of Kazakhstan, leader of the nation, N. A. Nazarbayev “Strategy “Kazakhstan-2050” [13], the National Development Strategy of the Republic of Tajikistan for the period up to 2030 [14], Decree of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan No. 636 “On approval of the National Development Plan of the Republic of Kazakhstan until 2025 and invalidation of some decrees of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan” [15], National Development Strategy of the Kyrgyz Republic for 2018-2040 [16], the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan “On the Development Strategy of New Uzbekistan for 2022-2026” [17], the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan “On the Strategy “Uzbekistan – 2030”” [18], National Development Program of the Kyrgyz Republic until 2026 [19]. To display qualitative and quantitative changes in the context of evaluating various indicators, materials containing statistical data were analysed: the KOF Globalisation Index [20], “Asia Population 2025” [21], M. Jazib [22], Population pyramids of the world from 1950 to 2100 [23], “Overall globalisation – Country rankings” [24].

To clarify certain historical events, by analysing the statements of several political figures and comparing the theses of the speeches, the method of direct speech analysis in informational and reference publications was used: “Closing the book on Turkmenbashi's “Rukhnama”” [25], “Karasai-Batyr is not guilty, the director is not guilty” by A. Azarov [26], “How can Central Asian countries promote collective regional identity” by A. Komilov and O. Tanbev [27], “By the course of sustainable development for prosperity of our fatherland and well-being of our people” [28], “Islam Karimov in today's Uzbekistan” [29], “The President of Turkmenistan signed a number of Resolutions” [30]. These materials, on the subject of the study, formed the basis for this work and laid the foundation for understanding the topic of national identity in the context of globalisation processes in the world.

### 3. Results

#### 3.1. Defining national identity in the 21st century

Phenomena such as national identity, self-determination, and historical-cultural development are currently in a state of crisis due to the intensification of globalisation and transformational processes around the world. Globalisation turns citizens of different countries into a global community, while at the same time creating threats and challenges to the national identity of individual states [6]. As a result, individual states are forced to seek ways to counteract the negative aspects of this process and to adapt to changes by improving both external relations and internal affairs. According to research conducted by the Institute of Economics in Zurich (Switzerland) on the level of globalisation processes in different countries of the world, only a comprehensive approach to the implementation of new solutions and tools in everyday practice, while preserving state sovereignty and traditional features (language, culture, religion, ethnic diversity), will make it possible to achieve sustainable development (Table 1).

Table 1. Top countries by level of globalisation in 2022\*

No.	Country	Overall score	Economic sphere	Political sphere	Social sphere
1	Netherlands	89.72	89.79	95.01	84.26
2	Switzerland	89.58	86.96	95.11	86.68
3	Belgium	88.9	88.05	95.81	82.66
4	United Kingdom	87.95	81.91	96.55	85.4
5	Germany	87.69	81.85	97.07	83.75
6	Sweden	87.63	84.05	95.5	83.36
7	Austria	87.6	82.96	94.65	85.19
8	France	86.72	81.28	96.85	82.03
9	Denmark	86.48	84.85	90.98	83.62
10	Finland	86.16	84.36	92.16	81.81
81	Kazakhstan	64.36	54.35	70.93	67.79
93	Kyrgyzstan	61.14	58.37	60.64	64.42
119	Uzbekistan	53.24	56.54	51.46	52.38
129	Tajikistan	51.78	50.88	56.25	48.08
178	Turkmenistan	41.23	34.53	38.3	49.73

\* The level of globalisation of countries is determined according to the Globalisation Index, which takes into account the economic, political and social aspects of globalisation processes in 190 countries. The current report of the Institute of Economics in Zurich (Switzerland) on the results for 2021 was presented in 2023. The next report on the results for 2023 is expected in 2025 (Source: compiled by the authors based on [20, 24]).

When evaluating countries through the lens of the level of globalisation processes within these countries – in particular, through the analysis of various indicators in the

economic, political and social spheres, the level of financial independence of the state, the situation regarding political governance at the local and national levels, the scale of unemployment and the overall well-being of the population – it can be concluded that the fewer the difficulties and contentious issues that exist in these areas, the higher the likelihood there is of forming a more conscious and united society in such countries. This approach allows for a high-quality assessment of the preconditions for the development of national self-awareness.

Before beginning the study, it is necessary to define the main terms and concepts that form the foundation, and establish certain conditions within the framework of examining issues related to national identity. Thus, identity is understood as a complex of multifaceted concepts, phenomena, and processes that encompass a range of qualities, characteristic traits of an individual or group, the appearance, forms of self-expression, methods, and manipulations [3,31-32]. The term “identity” is widely used across numerous fields and disciplines, such as sociology, psychology, political science and geography, and based on this, there are several subtypes of identity, each with its own specific features formed according to the sector in which it primarily functions (Table 2).

*Table 2. Main types of identity and features of their manifestation*

<b>Subtype</b>	<b>Type</b>	
	<b>Personal</b>	<b>Social</b>
<i>Social</i>	<i>Self-determination of a person as an independent unit with its own unique features</i>	<i>A person's acceptance of the place and role in a group or association</i>
<i>Gender</i>	<i>Awareness of oneself as a person of a clearly defined gender</i>	<i>Commitment to a community of women or men, unification into groups based on this characteristic</i>
<i>Religious</i>	<i>Acceptance of a certain belief as personal conviction and individual truth.</i>	<i>Participating in practices with others who share the same religious beliefs</i>
<i>Family</i>	<i>A person, like a daughter, son, mother, father, sister, brother, is a member of the family</i>	<i>A person's identification as part of a certain stratum of society – a family member with established family ties.</i>
<i>Professional</i>	<i>Choosing a person's professional path, their career development</i>	<i>Participation of a person in work processes – as a member of a work collective</i>
<i>Regional</i>	<i>A person's identification as an individual living in a certain territory (street, city, region)</i>	<i>Participation of a person in the life of a local society – community, district</i>
<i>Political</i>	<i>Commitment to certain political views, having one's own point of view in this direction</i>	<i>Participating in practices with others who share the same political views</i>
<i>National (ethnic)</i>	<i>Acceptance of language, culture, and history of one's origins</i>	<i>A person's identification as a member of a certain nationality, ethnic group, nation</i>

*(Source: compiled by the authors based on [7,33-36]).*

National identity, or ethnic identity, has numerous interpretations, explanations, definitions and theoretical foundations. National identity is the self-determination of an individual, and their awareness of belonging to a particular ethnic group, people, nation, or state [37]. Other researchers have viewed national identity as a combination of an individual's past and present, the way of life, and a set of values, rules, and constraints within a specific society [12]. Based on this understanding, the state of national identity – namely, the quality of its development and the depth of its integration into a person's life both as an individual and as a member of society – may change dynamically depending on the level of social, economic and political development of a given area, i.e., the place where a particular nation or ethnic group resides [11, 38].

When discussing forms and types of national identity, it is important to emphasise that due to the wide variety of its interpretations, there are also various extremes of this phenomenon – patriotism and nationalism – which likewise lack universally accepted definitions. Broadly speaking, patriotism is a concept describing support for, understanding of, and an adequate attitude toward one's place of residence (country) and the people around (nation) through the lens of unity, solidarity and shared identity [39]. Nationalism, by contrast, refers to a certain idea, strategy or policy, in which the national factor is the fundamental condition for the comprehensive development of the state and its society, in other words, the superiority of one's own nation (ethnic group) over others [8,40]. These two directions differ sharply, contrasting with, and forming, completely different approaches to understanding the essence of national identity. However, a skilful combination of certain elements from both creates the prerequisites for strengthening national consciousness and developing the nation amid globalisation-related changes.

Quite often, in the context of international relations studies, the term "regional identity" is used, referring to a certain commonality, a group or union of states or ethnicities within a defined area, region, or territory, shaped by similarities in language, culture, traditions, religion, and history (as in the case of the Central Asian countries).

Globalisation, as a phenomenon of the 21st century, also has many interpretations, depending on the field of application. Broadly, it is the process of integration and mutual interdependence among the world's states in economic, political, trade, religious, cultural areas and other spheres [6, 31, 41]. Due to globalisation processes, the boundaries, barriers, and factors that previously formed differences between peoples and countries are being erased to the greatest possible extent, eliminating the foundations of diversity and variety. The concept of globalisation was first introduced by political scientists and military experts in the mid-20th century, describing the processes that occurred in Europe after the end of the Second World War.

### **3.2. Specificity of manifestation of national identity in Asian countries**

As part of the study of the phenomenon of national identity in the region, it is important to form a general understanding of the situation and to make a forecast for future development in the context of self-determination, state integrity, and national unity by summarising and analysing a range of factors (for example, ethnic composition of the population, the popularity of certain religious beliefs, main language). By comparing such aspects across countries in the Asian region, it is possible to gain an overall picture of the prerequisites for the emergence of particular phenomena based on the available initial data (Table 3).

Table 3. List of states included in the Asian region as of 2024

Country	Independence date	Language	Square*	Population*	Religion
<b>Western Asia</b>					
Azerbaijan	August 30, 1991	Azerbaijani	86,600	10,336	Islam
Armenia	August 23, 1990	Armenian	29,800	2,973	Christianity
Bahrain	August 14, 1971	Arab	765***	1,607	Islam
Georgia	April 9, 1991	Georgian	69,700	3,701	Christianity
Israel	May 14, 1948	Hebrew and Arabic	20,770	9,387	Judaism
Jordan	1946	Arab	92,300	11,552	Islam
Iraq	October 3, 1932	Arabic and Kurdish	437,072	46,042	Islam
Iran	April 1, 1979****	Persian	1,648,000	91,567	Islam
Yemen	May 22, 1990****	Arab	527,970	40,583	Islam
Qatar	September 3, 1971	Arab	11,437	3,048	Islam
Cyprus	August 16, 1960	Greek and Turkish	9,250	1,358	Christianity
Kuwait	June 19, 1961	Arab	17,818	4,934	Islam
Lebanon	November 22, 1943	Arab	10,452	5,805	Islam
UAE*****	December 2, 1971	Arabic and English	83,600	11,027	Islam
Oman	July 23, 1970****	Arab	310,000	5,281	Islam
Saudi Arabia	September 23, 1932****	Arab	2,218,000	33,962	Islam
Syria	April 17, 1946	Arab	185,180	24,672	Islam
Türkiye	October 29, 1923****	Turkish	780,580	87,473	Islam
<b>Central Asia (Middle Asia)</b>					
Kazakhstan	December 16, 1991	Kazakh	2,724,902	20,592	Islam
Kyrgyzstan	August 31, 1991	Kyrgyz	199,951	7,186	Islam
Tajikistan	September 9, 1991	Tajik and Uzbek	142,000	10,590	Islam
Turkmenistan	October 27, 1991	Turkmen	491,200	7,494	Islam
Uzbekistan	September 1, 1991	Uzbek	447,400	36,361	Islam
<b>South Asia</b>					
Afghanistan	August 19, 1919	Pashto and Dari	652,864	42,647	Islam
Bangladesh	December 16, 1971	Bengal	144,000	173,562	Islam
Butane	December 17, 1907****	Dzongkha and English	47,000	791 524	Buddhism
India	August 15, 1947	Hindi and English	3,287,590	1,450,935	Hinduism
Maldives	July 26, 1965	Dhivehi	298***	527,799	Islam
Nepal	January 1, 1923	Nepali	140,800	29,651	Hinduism
Pakistan	August 14, 1947	Urdu and English	803,940	251,269	Islam
Sri Lanka	February 4, 1948	Sinhala and Tamil	65,610	23,103	Buddhism

Country	Independence date	Language	Square*	Population†	Religion
<b>East Asia</b>					
China	16th century BC****	Chinese	9,596,960	1,419,321	Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism
Mongolia	July 11, 1921	Mongolian	1,564,116	3,475	Buddhism
North Korea	September 9, 1948****	Korean	120,540	26,498	Officially no
South Korea	August 15, 1945	Korean	99,274	51,717	Buddhism
Japan	III-IV century****	Japanese	377,835	123,753	Shinto
<b>Southeast Asia</b>					
Brunei	January 1, 1984	Malay	5,770	462,721	Islam
Vietnam	September 2, 1945	Vietnamese	329,560	100,987	Buddhism
Indonesia	August 17, 1945	Indonesian	1,919,460	283,487	Islam
Cambodia	November 9, 1953	Khmer	181,040	17,638	Buddhism
Laos	July 19, 1949	Laotian	236,800	7,769	Buddhism
Malaysia	August 31, 1957	Malay	329,758	35,557	Islam
Myanmar	January 4, 1948	Burmese	678,500	54,500	Buddhism
Singapore	August 9, 1965	English, Chinese, Malay, and Tamil	692****	5,832	Buddhism
Thailand	1238 year****	Thai	514,000	71,668	Buddhism
East Timor	May 20, 2002	Tetum and Portuguese	15,007	1,400	Christianity
Philippines	July 4, 1946	Tagalog, Filipino, and English	300,000	115,843	Christianity

\* thousands of square kilometres; \*\* millions of people; \*\*\* thousands of people; \*\*\*\* date of foundation; \*\*\*\*\* United Arab Emirates (Source: compiled by the authors based on [4, 11, 21-23, 42-43]).

When considering the elements that shape the statehood of various countries (using the Asian region as an example), it is possible to identify key spheres that unite the countries of the region, as well as highlight certain disagreements formed, in essence, on the basis of differences and dissimilarities. These elements collectively form an overall picture of national identity in the region. For instance, in the overwhelming majority of Asian states, the dominant religion is Islam, which has a long history of emergence and development based on strong links between religion and the state. Moreover, countries that gain independence (either through exiting union formations or the end of the colonial stage of development) within a common time period often face similar developmental challenges and nation-building tasks because they start from comparable shared positions and problems.

The situation regarding language in Asia is highly diverse and multi-layered. The most widespread is Arabic, which, like Islam, has a long history of formation and development, and upon which nations and ethnic groups were formed. At the same time, the region is home to many other, less numerous languages, dialects, and vernaculars that

often differ significantly from one another, thereby creating focal points of misunderstanding and conflict, but at the same time introducing variety and novelty into the modern cultural and social life of the Asian population. The size of the territory and population can also play an important role in shaping the dominant language and religion there.

Asia is the most significant region on the planet in terms of its linguistic, cultural, religious, and historical characteristics. More than 5 billion people (around 60% of the global population) live in over 50 countries, and such scale speaks to the vast range of directions and developmental trajectories these countries follow, each with completely different paths and scenarios [8, 11]. During the course of historical transformation, specific and often contradictory national ideologies were created in the region, around which nations continued to form.

When studying the general trends in the emergence of national identity in Asian countries, it is important to emphasise that the basis of these processes was colonisation by Western powers (primarily Spain, Portugal, the United Kingdom, France, the Netherlands, and the United States) during the period from the 16<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> centuries [1-2, 44]. Over a long period, the colonial policies of these global powers led to the development in most Asian countries of a specific ideology that merged the traditions and beliefs of local populations with new trends from the Western world.

At the same time, from the late 19th to early 20th century, national movements began to gain strength in the region. These were based on religious and cultural calls (e.g. clashes involving monks in the Philippines and Indonesia), secular and educational activism (student protests in Burma and Malaysia), ethnic movements (uprisings in Cambodia), and political movements (in the majority of countries in the region) [1]. On the basis of the formation of national ideas in these countries, political elites and forces began to take shape, directly influencing the processes of state development. It is important to note that under the guise of national identity and the need to preserve and multiply national features, the number of authoritarian regimes in the region increased, many of which remain in power today. Leaders of such countries, under the pretext of fighting for national purity, unity of the people, and uniting all citizens within and beyond the state, often pursue their own self-serving goals, applying various harsh methods and tactics. Such an approach, however, quite often does lead to the strengthening of a particular ideology based on principles of ethnicity and mono-ethnic society.

### **3.3. Features of national identity in Central Asia**

Central Asia is a region that represents a unique combination of history, culture, language, as well as ethnic, religious, and traditional beliefs. The countries of the region share a centuries-long common history of development, during which they experienced peaks of cooperation and prosperity, as well as periods of confrontation and decline. When speaking about the national identity of Central Asian states, it is suggested that regional collaboration among Central Asian states actually strengthens, rather than weakens, the distinctiveness and independence of individual national identities, so it is crucial to reinforce this aspect [7, 45]. Thanks to joint and coordinated advancement in a rapidly changing world, in which globalisation processes are becoming increasingly unpredictable and pose a certain threat to independence, countries in Central Asia recognise the importance of regional cooperation, from which emerges the phenomenon of regional identity. And despite some apparent contradiction, it is precisely through the successful policy of the regional distinctiveness of the Central Asian states that national self-awareness is formed individually in each country, but within the boundaries of the region. Thus, consideration of national identity is impossible without taking into account

its interrelation with regional identity, which for the countries of this region is a fundamental factor in the formation of public consciousness.

The countries of Central Asia shape the national identity based on three components: the legal and political framework, traditions and beliefs (religion), and everyday life [10]. The very idea of a nation grows from a consensus and mutual understanding regarding the core criteria of these three elements. However, in the modern world of the 21st century – in the era of widespread digital technologies, which make many processes and phenomena much simpler, easier and more transparent – uniform and equal interaction among these elements cannot always be guaranteed [46]. For instance, when asked where people aged 18 to 35 obtain information about national identity, uniqueness, and the history of their country, the responses of residents from three major cities in Kazakhstan (Astana, Almaty, Shymkent) indicated that, for example, the role of official authorities in this context is rather insignificant, whereas everyday communication and contact with friends and relatives play a significant role in shaping the understanding of identity (Figure 1).

The situation in which a citizen most actively receives information about the essence and meaning of national identity as a phenomenon, and about the state's self-awareness, primarily from the immediate environment (relatives, friends, neighbours), or from messages in mass media that are neither authorised in this field, nor experts, indicates that the role of the state as the defining centre for the development of the national idea, at the beginning of the 21st century, is relatively weak – especially when compared with modern tools for receiving and exchanging information. This situation may also suggest that officials are unwilling to actively participate in the processes of developing the national unity of the citizens, and therefore, in some respects, distance themselves from addressing the issue.

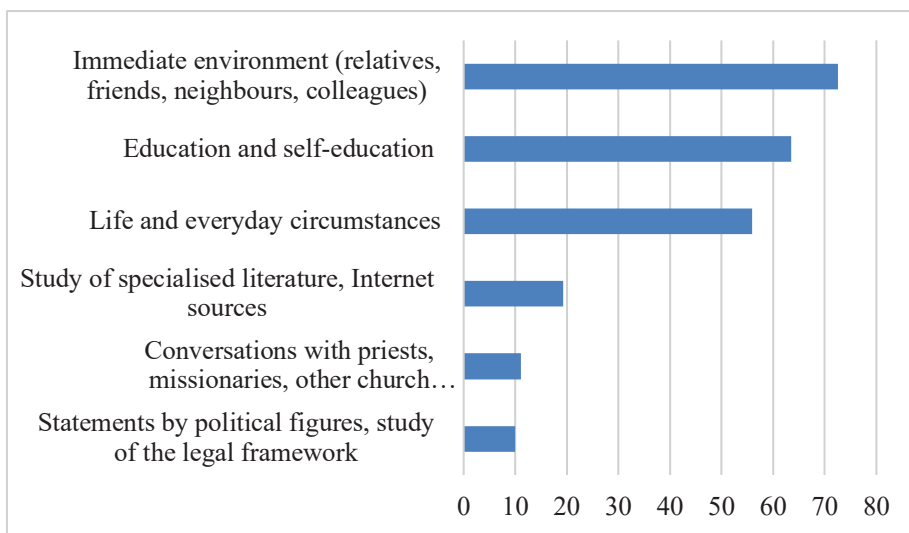


Figure 1. Results of a study conducted in three major cities of Kazakhstan on the source of information regarding the essence, meaning, and origins of the national identity of the state (%). The survey was conducted among people aged 18-39 in Astana, Almaty, Shymkent in 2023. (Source: compiled by the authors based on E. Burova et al. [9].)

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, all countries in the region began the process of forming national identity [4, 47]. However, this phenomenon did not start from scratch; while part of the Union state, the republics had already long maintained their own trajectory of development and idea of building statehood. The core emphasis was on the dominance of the titular nation, as well as on the glorification of historical figures and events that laid the foundation for the emergence of the modern national state (Table 4). At the beginning of the 21st century, this strategy remains a key component of both domestic and foreign policy in the region's countries, especially in light of globalisation processes, where national and ethnic differences are being erased, thereby minimising all diversity.

*Table 4. National idea: its foundations and specifics in the countries of Central Asia.*

<b>Country</b>	<b>Main elements of the national idea</b>
<i>Kazakhstan</i>	<i>National symbols – yurt and galloping horseman. Ideology of “Eurasianism”. Renaming of Soviet names in Kazakh style. The origins of Kazakh civilisation come from Ulus Jochi (Golden Horde) – a state that existed in the 13th-15th centuries.</i>
<i>Uzbekistan</i>	<i>National hero – Tamerlane, the Turkic-Mongol conqueror who founded the Timurid Empire in the 14th century. Annexation to the Soviet Union – colonisation, forceful seizure. Uzbeks suffered significant losses in World War II (based on the population at the time).</i>
<i>Kyrgyzstan</i>	<i>The national symbol is the yurt, depicted on the country's flag. Nomadic traditions are revered. National heroes are the mythical warrior Manas (there is a dispute between Kyrgyzstan and China regarding the ownership of the epic about Manas, first published in 1885) and the poet Ch. Aitmatov, who gained recognition during the Soviet period. The history of the republic spans over two thousand years.</i>
<i>Tajikistan</i>	<i>The Republic is the successor of the Samanid state, which existed in the period 819-999. Banknotes depict Sh. Shotemur, a Soviet communist, the initiator of the country's transition from autonomy to a Soviet state within the Soviet Union.</i>
<i>Turkmenistan</i>	<i>National hero – Togrul-bek, a statesman who created the Seljuk State, which existed in the period 1037-1194. Soviet period in history – colonisation. The bloodiest event in history – the battle with Russian troops near Geok-Tepe in 1881.</i>

*Source: compiled by the authors based on [8, 46-49].*

The development of the idea of the historical population of the Central Asian countries is becoming an increasingly important and key line in creating and developing long-term strategies for the states of the region in the new millennium. Communicating, both to the local population and to the international community, the defining role (whether real or exaggerated) in many world events is seen by the leadership of these states as a tool for elevating the country to the level of global players who also possess an impressive and long history. Furthermore, a combination of certain features and events from the past can indicate the vector of national development of the given state (for instance, all leaders of independent Uzbekistan considered the Soviet period in history as colonialism and a time of restrictions and deprivation, and viewed independence as

a chance for complete freedom of action, based on ideas voiced during the rule of Tamerlane (1370–1405), whereas Tajikistan, on the contrary, considered its time within the Soviet Union one of the most productive and beneficial, and revered Soviet-era figures). All these circumstances shape and develop elements of national consciousness in the societies of Central Asian states.

The idea of developing national identity in Central Asian countries through the strengthening of regional identity was voiced with renewed emphasis at the media forum in Astana in December 2022, where representatives of the region agreed that due to historical commonality, similarity and cohesion, it was possible to achieve national uniqueness not only within a nation-state but also within the region [27].

The national identity of Central Asian countries, based on regional interaction, rests on factors such as the shared history of the state through the lens of global development and transformation; geographical and climatic conditions; social issues (migration, declining birth rates, unemployment); societal specifics, ethnic composition, religions represented; resource potential and food reserves; and the financial and economic situation.

However, the most important and decisive significance for national formation lies in historical, cultural-political and religious aspects. In the regulatory and legal acts of the region's countries, emphasis is placed on these very aspects, which play the most crucial role in the establishment of statehood through the creation and support of a national idea. The priority of ethnic and national transformation of the state as an integral part of the Republic's future development under the crisis conditions of the early third millennium is highlighted in the Address by the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Leader of the Nation, N. A. Nazarbayev "Strategy Kazakhstan-2050" [13] and in the Decree of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan No. 636 "On approval of the National Development Plan of the Republic of Kazakhstan until 2025 and invalidation of some decrees of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan" [15]. Thus, emphasis is laid on the comprehensive development of citizens as full members of society, formed on the basis of cultural, historical and religious unity.

The connecting role of the country in preserving historical heritage and shaping a new model of 21st-century society to create guarantees for stable and gradual population transformation is underlined in the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On the Development Strategy of New Uzbekistan for 2022–2026" [17] and in the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On the Strategy Uzbekistan – 2030" [18]. Historical heritage as the only correct ideological foundation for future national development is cited as a key element of state structure in the National Development Strategy of the Kyrgyz Republic for 2018–2040 [16] and in the National Development Program of the Kyrgyz Republic until 2026 [19]. The sociocultural and economic components are elevated to the status of primary goals for sustainable development in the near term – as a necessary condition for strengthening the national idea of a prosperous Central Asian state – in the National Development Strategy of the Republic of Tajikistan for the period up to 2030 [14].

The importance of the historical legacy left after the rule of Tughril Beg, a statesman who established the Seljuk State, in the formation of the state's national idea is emphasised by the course of sustainable development for the prosperity of our fatherland and the well-being of our people [28] and in the Programme of the President of Turkmenistan for the socio-economic development of the country in 2022-2028 [30]. The legal documents stress the critical importance of developing the idea of the nation as the foundational basis for state and societal formation and outline a direction for regional cooperation aimed at strengthening the national unity of the peoples of Central Asia. One of the main emphases is placed on the shared historical, cultural and religious heritage of past centuries.

### **3.4. Cultural, historical and religious trends of national identity in the region**

In the 1990s, Central Asia experienced a shift in the direction of priorities and future development. The rapid transformation of existing systems and the restructuring of established ties and structures were often swift and rather unpredictable. However, at the core of all cultural-political processes remained clan-based kinship relations. In Kazakhstan, the Soviet leadership was replaced by the Kazakh elite – representatives of clans and influential families who had participated in the country's affairs since pre-Soviet times. The main quality of the new politicians was not so much the ability to address the internal and external problems of the republic but rather to be placed in situations where a fortunate combination of circumstances and family background allowed them to become part of the state's governing apparatus. In Kyrgyzstan, a similar situation of familial and clan-based power was observed. The culture of power transfer in the country has a long history in which this very system became the cause of various events (for example, the abuse of power by relatives of A. Akayev led to the Tulip Revolution in spring 2005 and his subsequent resignation) [5, 46].

Society in Turkmenistan functions on the culture and everyday life of around 30 tribes. All presidents of the republic, starting from the first, S. Niyazov, to the current one, S. Berdimuhamedow, were members of clan groups. The cause of the civil war in Tajikistan in 1992-1994 was the confrontation between western and southern clans, where representatives of the Khujand clan had remained in power for more than 50 years [48, 50]. A distinctive feature of Uzbekistan in this regard is the territorial rather than family-based principle. In the country, it is extremely important to originate from the village, city, or district where a political figure was also born or resided for some time in order to be able to reach top leadership positions in all areas. The first president of the country, I. Karimov, was not from any influential clan, and thus, upon coming to power, sought to be positioned outside the clan system, rising above it and controlling it. However, soon, due to the activity of certain interested parties in the republic, authoritarianism intensified, and the role of succession once again came to the fore.

In all Central Asian countries, the main religion is Islam, which encompasses many domestic and behavioural rituals, cultural values, notions and preferences, linked to traditional beliefs, shamanic customs and paganism [10, 51]. These elements were especially visible and active among the rural population, which for a long time remained illiterate and largely uninformed about the affairs of large cities and metropolises. Islam, as the foundational religion in the region, often serves as a tool for manipulation among ruling elites in the republics. Nonetheless, there is an understanding that religious manipulation tends to create social instability, particularly by fuelling radical and extremist sentiments. The most active movements in the region include Wahhabism (Salafism) from Saudi Arabia and the terrorist organisations Hizb ut-Tahrir and the Islamic Movement [39].

It is important to emphasise that, although the leaderships of the republics actively resist terrorist movements and religious radicalism, these phenomena are still deeply embedded in the lives of many citizens. This is due to factors such as low living standards, weak social systems, and familial problems. These circumstances influence the overall perception of national identity in the region, as religion represents one of the core components of the idea of unity and cohesion in Central Asia. Returning to one's roots, honouring the memory of historical figures, and studying past events that have had a direct or indirect influence on the formation and development of Central Asian republics have become key elements in the revival of the region's national idea. Therefore, a common characteristic is the idealisation of the historical past, the creation of an

image of millennia-old history of national states and the defining impact on the region and the world.

For example, in 1993, at a session of the United Nations General Assembly, the President of Uzbekistan, I. Karimov, declared that the Republic's history dates back more than three thousand years and named Tamerlane – a Turkic-Mongol conqueror who created the Timurid Empire in the 14th century – as one of its founding fathers [29]. In the *Ruhnama*, a book authored by the President of Turkmenistan, S. Niyazov, there is mention that the Turkmen nation appeared more than five thousand years ago. Other sources have also claimed that S. Turkmenbashi was a descendant of the military commander Alexander the Great. In Kazakhstan, it is considered confirmed that President N. Nazarbayev is a descendant of the warrior Karasay, who lived in the early 17th century [25-26].

Having examined the characteristics of the establishment and development of statehood in the selected Central Asian countries on the basis of the creation and formation of the national idea as a foundation for self-determination and functioning in the context of globalisation, it may be concluded that this aspect of foreign and domestic political activity receives considerable attention in the region. Glorification of historical figures, the study of history, and the use of religion and traditional customs serve as tools for establishing the foundation for strengthening the subjectivity of Central Asian states amid the crisis of the world order. And although some methods are quite controversial (for example, deliberate distortion of certain historical facts or attributing kinship with famous figures), the countries of the region have the opportunity to skilfully use the advantages, as in the early 21st century their potential and capabilities became a key area of interest for global players. Sound policies based on a genuine national idea and uniqueness will enable successful development and the shaping of a globalisation-type state with national characteristics and features.

To improve the quality of interaction in the social sphere and in the area of state-society relations for the development and strengthening of national unity, it is advisable to undertake a number of steps and decisions. State authorities must serve as guarantors of the country's development in accordance with principles of independence, unity, solidarity, and the preservation of historical, cultural, traditional, family and other values. This work can be carried out through continuous monitoring and control of certain directions (education, science, information policy), namely, the evaluation and adjustment of the activities of entities engaged in communicating national development ideas among all population segments.

In the legislative sphere, it is necessary to develop and gradually implement across all sectors of state and public development a strategy for establishing and maintaining a national idea, upon which national consciousness and national identity will be formed and strengthened. It is essential to consider all components of this process – both obvious positive outcomes and potential threats – during the development of various approaches to legally enshrining national policy. In the field of education, it is necessary to make full use of all available opportunities for specialists in this area. First and foremost, beginning in primary school, it is imperative to introduce a subject on national identity, teaching within it the history, culture, and traditions of the nation or ethnic group. Additionally, it would be useful to organise various activities under the banner of unity and cohesion to strengthen values and moral qualities.

In the scientific sphere, research into the essence and meaning, as well as the role and influence, of various manifestations of identity on the formation and development of both individuals and regions and states, should become a priority. A wide selection of theoretical materials will enable a broader and deeper understanding of the issue of identity and self-determination in the context of globalisation. In the social sphere, it is

necessary to reconsider phenomena related to the definition of dissent and non-traditional manifestations in all directions in order to eliminate artificially created conditions that divide society and prevent it from developing on the basis of a national idea. Moreover, it is important to support non-governmental organisations whose core activities involve supporting young people and children in their upbringing around the principles of unity and solidarity, respect for their country and those around them, and the preservation of traditions and beliefs.

In the information sphere, plans must be developed to highlight the advantages of developing and promoting the national idea among citizens as a fundamental aspect of the successful development of the state. A systematic approach and a clear understanding of the real situation in society – its needs and sentiments, as well as the problems of its various members – are essential for the most effective impact on specific groups and communities of people for the most positive result. Furthermore, it is important to create a system of interagency contact, coordination, and cooperation between government bodies (central and local) and representatives of non-governmental organisations; to develop a unique model for the formation and effective development of a national society (within the state and the region) with an emphasis on the national idea, its support and strengthening among the population.

#### 4. Discussion

Having studied the issue of national identity in Asian countries in the context of analysing and comparing historical, cultural, religious and other aspects and elements of this issue, it can be concluded that this topic is highly relevant and widely discussed at various levels of state and public governance. Researchers from both Asian countries and from Europe, America and other continents are actively analysing the situation regarding the national development of statehood in the context of globalisation processes and phenomena.

The study found that a combination of modern approaches with historical and traditional mechanisms inherent to specific countries and regions may assist in addressing current problems and challenges (climate change, ecological disasters, armed conflicts, social instability). E. Soler Pastor et al. [38] also shared a similar view on the fact that a combination of multicultural experience, global identity, and historical, religious and other aspects, including migrant movements, contributed to the strengthening of national identity due to situations threatening societies and countries. However, this study pointed out that not all states have had such successful experiences – some have failed or only partially managed to preserve or revive the national idea.

Terrorism, rapid radicalisation of society, the intensification of extremist organisations and groups, are all factors in the improper use of religion to impose certain ideas, thoughts, and goals on society, which is clearly demonstrated by the unstable situation regarding security in Asian countries [52]. This view, expressed in the paper, is similar to the reflections of G. Luo [40] who suggested that poverty and political upheaval gave terrorism a social foundation to attract people dissatisfied with their lives and who had received little support from the state – practically in all Asian countries. Nevertheless, this study has expressed the thesis that a sound and balanced policy in planning the development and formation of the nation-state, through the introduction of ideology and the use of traditions and cultural values, could help counter terrorism and effectively fight against it.

Elements of national consciousness such as culture, history, traditions, way of life,

social conditions and political developments together create a solid foundation for regional cooperation among countries that share much in the context of these elements. This idea, presented in the paper, resonates with the conclusions of S. Loong et al. [2] that commonality in terms of territory and geographical conditions forms the basis for the emergence and strengthening of regional identity through cooperation. In this study, however, emphasis was placed on culture and religion as determining factors in forming regional-scale unity.

Regional cooperation, which is formed on the basis of shared interests, goals, and objectives – also for jointly confronting threats and challenges – is a significant tool in countering crises amid globalisation processes and rapid transformations of traditional forms of interaction. M. E. Bria and K. F. T. Lam [35] hold a similar position on this issue, believing that common borders, whether water or land, create natural conditions for the drive towards unity and joint development. However, the present study also pointed to the likelihood of disputes and conflicts arising, precisely on the grounds of shared borders, water resources, and cultural and historical values.

National identity is the awareness of a country's citizens that they belong to a political community and have a tendency to accept the political, cultural and ethnic values of the state not only as part of society but also as an individual [53-55]. Z. Huang et al. [32] reached a similar conclusion, reflecting on national identity in Asian countries as a full-fledged instrument for shaping the internal and external policy of the state. Yet, when speaking of personal self-consciousness – how a person understands the homeland, its cultural and historical heritage – it is important not to create artificial forms or versions of this heritage, as the effect may be counterproductive, leading to misunderstanding and disputes on the regional level.

Trends in the early 2020s indicate some negativity towards globalisation, primarily not because it brings obvious problems to global society, but because it is excessively politicised and used for personal agendas by state leaders and other players in domestic and foreign policy. S. Walter [41] reflected in a similar vein: the rise in the number of globalisation sceptics, who oppose widespread transformational processes, has led to the gradual formation of more protectionist, isolationist and nationalist policies, posing a direct threat to the latest principles and standards of international contact. However, in the context of Central Asian countries, it may be said that the political strategies are aimed more at regional cooperation rather than independent existence within the region.

The paper analysed how important it is to explore the essence and meaning of national identity in terms of studying the main approaches to interpreting this concept, and how this phenomenon influences the status of states as subjects, the national borders, and the positions in the international legal arena. The importance of strengthening national identity and its role in the development of society in a nation-state was also discussed by S. Sarmini et al. [33], noting that Asia, with its diversity of social conditions, political systems and levels of financial and economic development, serves as a vivid example of how vital it is to study and correctly understand the processes of self-identification on a global scale. Central Asia acts as one of the most consolidated and cohesive subjects in the region through the lens of preserving national identity while actively developing regional cooperation [56-57].

Identity as a philosophical phenomenon includes several dimensions – personal identity, social, professional, religious, cultural, gender, and also national identity, which consists of a number of components actively applied for various purposes across many spheres and directions. This conclusion, voiced in this paper, shares a common basis with the findings of C.K.V. De Dreu et al. [39] on the origins of national consciousness in different historical periods and across various parts of the world, and in which the

authors compared certain components and assessed the maturity of societies based on the ability to use their own culture, history, religion, and traditions for the benefit of the future development of the state, arguing that a weak social stratum and underdeveloped society, as seen in some Asian countries, hinders the free development of statehood under new conditions. However, the present paper argues that Asian countries, on the contrary, are quite advanced in terms of civil society, thanks to a rich history and active participation in many global events.

Having considered key areas in the context of the formation and development of national consciousness in certain Asian countries, the following conclusion was drawn: the importance and priority of implementing aspects of national identity is one of the main areas of study for researchers from many countries around the world. The conclusions of experts in this field, as well as the findings of the present paper, make it possible to conclude that issues of independence and uniqueness of Asian peoples will remain extremely relevant and important in the near future.

## 5. Conclusions

By studying aspects of national identity in Asian states in the context of the history of the creation of national ideology, its establishment and formation under various historical events (colonisation or independence), and its use for stable evolutionary transformation under globalisation processes, some conclusions were made. Emphasis was placed on the fact that all modern societies that have reached a democratic stage of development, and are successful nations to some extent in the early 21st century, have used the national idea (formed on the basis of historical past, cultural and religious potential) for development, creating a strong foundation from it while applying new tools and mechanisms made available in the early third millennium.

Asian countries also applied such an approach to the formation of statehood, using both positive and negative experiences based on various circumstances and historical situations: colonisation by Western powers, internal armed conflicts, regional wars, civil uprisings. Central Asia, in this regard, is no exception, and using historical and cultural features for competitive existence in the 21st century is a key technique, certain elements of which are successfully embedded in political development strategies. However, some aspects from these countries' past (such as clan-based power succession, embellishment of certain events and the role of historical periods, the creation of fictitious or unreliable facts about the founding date of the state, or publicised genealogical ties of current leaders with historical – often mythical and legendary – figures) cause difficulties, conflicts, and disputes over national heritage.

Nevertheless, in conditions of instability and total reorientation at a global level, Asian states have the opportunity to become key foreign policy players on the continent, using, among other things, elements of national identity. This is particularly relevant for Central Asian countries, which in the 21st century – amid the rapid transformation of nearly all existing ties and systems under globalisation – have become part of the sphere of interest of major global players. This has become a reality, due not only to the region's resource potential, but also to its active foreign policy based on a clear national ideology of identity and self-determination, and its important role in many global events.

Having conducted research in the field of national identity in the context of defining the main concepts, features, and characteristics of the phenomenon, it seems appropriate for future academic inquiry to study the transformation of regional identity and national consciousness under the real threat to a state's independence (through the lens of potential military invasion by another state).

Research limitations included an insufficient amount of data on the cultural and historical development of certain regions and areas of Asia; the diversity and multidirectionality in defining “national identity” in scholarly literature, which introduces a wide array of diverse factors, specifics, and characteristics that must be considered and analysed for the theoretical understanding of the issue at hand. Further research prospects depend on the decisions and actions of Asian countries aimed at strengthening internal ties within nation-states through the reform of systems and the revision of fundamental approaches to the concept, essence, and meaning of national self-determination and consciousness.

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### Summary

This study examines how Asian countries, particularly in Central Asia, have developed national identity through historical, cultural, and religious dimensions amid globalization. The research focuses on five Central Asian states – Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan,

Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan – by analyzing their post-Soviet nation-building processes. The authors demonstrate that national identity in these countries rests on three pillars: legal and political frameworks, traditional beliefs and religion, and everyday cultural practices. A common strategy across the region involves glorifying historical figures and events, sometimes real and sometimes mythical, to establish legitimacy and continuity for modern statehood. Leaders claim descent from legendary warriors or cite ancient civilizations as foundations for their republics. Regional cooperation emerges as crucial for strengthening individual national identities. Despite sharing common Islamic heritage, nomadic traditions, and Soviet history, each country has crafted distinct narratives. However, challenges remain, including clan-based governance, religious extremism, and the manipulation of historical facts for political purposes. The study reveals significant disparities in globalization integration, with Kazakhstan ranking considerably higher than Turkmenistan in economic, political, and social development indicators. The authors argue that successful national identity formation requires balancing modern governance with cultural preservation, and recommend enhanced educational programs, comprehensive legal strategies, and systematic information campaigns to strengthen national consciousness while respecting diversity and promoting regional solidarity in an increasingly interconnected world.

### Riassunto

Il presente studio si prefigge di esaminare come i paesi asiatici, in particolare quelli dell'Asia centrale, abbiano sviluppato la propria identità nazionale attraverso le dimensioni storica, culturale e religiosa nel contesto della globalizzazione. La ricerca si focalizza su cinque Stati dell'Asia centrale – Kazakistan, Uzbekistan, Kirghizistan, Tagikistan e Turkmenistan – esaminandone i processi di costruzione nazionale post-sovietici. Gli autori dimostrano che l'identità nazionale in questi paesi si fonda su tre pilastri: il quadro giuridico e politico, le credenze tradizionali e la religione, nonché le pratiche culturali quotidiane. Una strategia comune in tutta la regione consiste nella glorificazione di figure e eventi storici, talvolta reali e talvolta mitici, al fine di stabilire la legittimità e la continuità della sovranità statale moderna. I leader rivendicano la discendenza da guerrieri leggendari o citano civiltà antiche come fondamenti delle loro repubbliche. La cooperazione regionale emerge come un fattore fondamentale per il rafforzamento delle singole identità nazionali. Nonostante condividano un patrimonio islamico comune, tradizioni nomadi e la storia sovietica, ogni paese ha elaborato narrazioni distinte. Tuttavia, permangono delle sfide, tra cui la governance basata sui clan, l'estremismo religioso e la manipolazione dei fatti storici per scopi politici.

Lo studio evidenzia significative disuguaglianze nell'integrazione alla globalizzazione, con il Kazakistan che si posiziona a livelli notevolmente superiori rispetto al Turkmenistan per quanto riguarda gli indicatori di sviluppo economico, politico e sociale. Gli autori sostengono che una formazione efficace dell'identità nazionale richieda un equilibrio tra governance moderna e conservazione culturale, e raccomandano il potenziamento dei programmi educativi, strategie giuridiche globali e campagne informative sistematiche per rafforzare la coscienza nazionale, nel rispetto della diversità e promuovendo la solidarietà regionale in un mondo sempre più interconnesso.