

NATIONAL IDENTITY OF THE KOREAN DIASPORA IN THE CONTEXT OF A MULTIETHNIC SOCIETY: A SOCIO- PHILOSOPHICAL APPROACH

Usarqulov Oybek Mirodilovich
Researcher, Fergana State University
e-mail:oybekusarkulov@gmail.com

Abstract:

This article examines, through the example of the Korean diaspora, the modern mechanisms of preserving and developing national identity from a socio-philosophical perspective. In the context of contemporary globalization, the issue of national identity is considered not only as the preservation of cultural heritage but also as a strategic factor in ensuring the social stability and spiritual unity of society. In this regard, particular attention is paid to the role of state policy in strengthening national identity, social programs related to the diaspora, as well as support mechanisms in the fields of education and culture.

Keywords: Korean diaspora, national identity, social philosophy, multiethnic society, state policy, cultural heritage, globalization, transnational relations, future generations, social memory.

Introduction

From the first days of independence, the worldview of interethnic harmony and humanism inherent in the people of Uzbekistan, along with long-established national values, became even more evident. This was also reflected in the state policy. Interethnic harmony, interfaith tolerance, and mutual solidarity were regarded as key guarantees of stability and progress in the region.

In this context, the activities of the **International Cultural Center** and various friendship societies, established in 1992, were aimed at supporting the ethnic groups and nationalities living in the country in preserving their identity and using the characteristics specific to their culture.

In particular, during the years of independence, more than **120 active members** of national cultural centers were awarded state prizes, medals, and orders, including **14 individuals** who received the honorary title of “*Hero of Uzbekistan*.” These indicators vividly demonstrate the high level of attention paid to interethnic relations in the Republic of Uzbekistan.

Literature Review

In the current era of deepening global integration, international relations are developing not only within political or economic frameworks but also through **people's diplomacy**. *People's diplomacy* refers to activities aimed at strengthening friendship and cooperation among nations through cultural, scientific, and social exchanges, complementing and enriching intergovernmental relations.

As a practical manifestation of this concept, international cooperation based on mutual respect and friendship contributes significantly to strengthening Uzbekistan's positive image on the global stage.

Studies conducted by Korean diaspora associations (Koryo Saram) in Central Asia show a strong desire among ethnic Koreans to preserve their identity and revive their native language. Many respondents reported having the opportunity to learn modern Korean, while an even greater number expressed a strong wish to study the language themselves and ensure their children are proficient in it.

The importance of revitalizing the Korean language is reflected in the fact that more than **80%** of respondents consider it a priority to develop education in Korean, publish literature, and expand radio and television programs in the language.

Currently, the Korean language is taught in **130 schools** across Uzbekistan, **45 of which are located in Tashkent**.

This serves as an important socio-cultural mechanism for preserving cultural diversity in society and supporting the national identity of ethnic groups. It not only ensures the linguistic and cultural continuity of the Korean diaspora but also contributes to the formation of a shared civic identity by strengthening interethnic dialogue, tolerance, and mutual understanding in a multiethnic society.

On **July 3, 2017**, a **monument of gratitude** entitled "*Thank You to the Uzbek People for Their Sincerity and Kindness*" was unveiled by ethnic Koreans in Uzbekistan at **Seoul Park**, located in Tashkent's "Friendship" Park.

Moreover, the **former President of the Republic of Korea, Lee Myung-bak (2008–2013)**, was awarded the "**Order of Friendship**" by the **First President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Islam Karimov**, in **2015**, which symbolized the enduring ties of friendship and cooperation between the two nations.

The awarding of the "*Order of Friendship*" is not only an official state honor but also serves as a **social symbol**. As a symbol, it strengthens friendly relations between the two nations and imbues the process of restoring historical and cultural closeness with **philosophical meaning**. In philosophy, the concept of a symbol holds a special significance in the self-awareness of society. Therefore, this award should not be viewed merely as an individual achievement but rather as a **value representing international social unity**.

In **2019**, with the participation of the Presidents of the Republic of Uzbekistan and the Republic of Korea, the *House of Korean Culture and Art*, built in cooperation with Korea, was inaugurated. This event is not only a **symbolic act of diplomatic partnership** but also, from

a socio-philosophical perspective, a vivid manifestation of **cultural identity, civilizational dialogue, and the exchange of transnational values.**

The **former President of the Republic of Korea, Moon Jae-in (2017–2022)**, during his **state visit to Uzbekistan in 2019**, was awarded the title of **Honorary Doctor** by the **Tashkent State University of Oriental Studies.**

This event, firstly, symbolizes the **integration of academic and scientific cooperation with political and diplomatic relations.** The conferment of an honorary doctorate recognizes not only the political activity of a state leader but also his contribution to **scientific and spiritual heritage** and his **role in promoting intercultural dialogue.** This demonstrates that **science and education are regarded as strategic foundations** of international cooperation.

Secondly, this event reveals the **socio-philosophical essence of cultural and diplomatic dialogue.** The presentation of an honorary degree at a university is not merely an academic recognition but also a **symbol of the exchange of moral values and intellectual solidarity** between societies. Thus, the cooperation between Uzbekistan and Korea is not confined to the political level but has risen to the level of **education, scientific research, and civilizational convergence of values.**

In **February 2020**, the **VIII Extraordinary Conference of the Association of Koreans (Koryo Saram)** was held, during which several important decisions were adopted. The event was attended by **Lyudmila Li**, Chairperson of the **Korean Association of Kazakhstan**, **Alexander Son**, Chairperson of the **Association of Koreans of Russia** (European part of the former USSR), **Andrey Kim**, Head of the **Tashkent Korean Cultural Center**, as well as representatives of regional Korean cultural centers. Members of the **Tashkent Regional Branch of the Association of Koreans in Uzbekistan (AKKU)** provided significant assistance during the quarantine period. Throughout the year, various **charity concerts, cultural, and educational events** were organized.

Starting from **April 2020**, weekly live broadcasts featuring **Pak In Shik**, Chairman of the **Association of Koreans in Uzbekistan**, began airing on the *Koryo TV* channel on **YouTube.** These broadcasts focused on the activities of the Association of Koreans in Uzbekistan and discussed various projects in multiple fields. *Koryo TV* also produces engaging programs about life in Uzbekistan and the cultural, educational, social, and charitable activities of the Korean diaspora. Currently, the channel has more than **13,200 subscribers** and features over **800 videos** providing interesting insights and news about **Korean culture, education, and traditions.**

The newspaper “*Koryo Sinmun*”, published in Uzbekistan, has been in circulation for **over 100 years** in the Korean language. It continues to cover important events in the life of the **Korean diaspora in Uzbekistan and throughout Central Asia.** The publication not only provides information but also plays an essential role in **preserving the Korean language, culture, customs, and traditions**, and in **transmitting them to the younger generation.**

The newspaper “*Koreytsy Uzbekistana*”, published by the **Association of the Korean National Cultural Center**, and “*Koryo Ilbo*”, published by the **Association of the Korean Cultural Center of Kazakhstan**, deserve special mention not only for their news content but

also for their diverse sections dedicated to **culture, art, education, and the promotion of the Korean language**. These newspapers include youth pages, special sections for women, culinary recipes, and samples of folk art. They play the role of a **bridge in the social life of the Korean diaspora**, connecting generations and communities.

The **Association of the Korean National Cultural Center (KNCCA)** not only teaches the Korean language but also actively promotes **the development of national culture**, preserving and celebrating traditional customs and values. Within this association operate various organizations such as the “*Tinbo*” *Scientific and Technical Society*, the *Folk Art Society*, folk ensembles and dance groups (“*Arirang*,” “*Koryo*,” and others), ensembles like “*Kottonori*,” “*Morrobonnon*,” and “*Retro*,” as well as the **ITF Taekwondo National Association**, and several media outlets such as “*Koryo Simnun*” (published since 1997) and “*Koreysy Uzbekistana*” (published since 2019). Additionally, the “**Uzbekistan–Korea Friendship Society**” operates under its auspices.

The KNCCA unites **over 30 regional, city, and district Korean cultural centers** across the country. An **Intellectuals’ Guild** has also been established within the association, bringing together artists, painters, and writers. The KNCCA makes a significant contribution to **preserving the historical memory and national identity** of the Korean community in Uzbekistan.

Over the years of living in Uzbekistan, the Korean population has become an **integral and inseparable part of the country**. Uzbekistan has become their homeland. Here, the Koreans have lived their conscious lives, raised new generations, and formed the **elite of the Korean community in Uzbekistan**. Over time, mutual respect and friendly relations have developed between the peoples of Uzbekistan, strengthening **cultural rapprochement between Koreans and other nationalities**.

Today, Koreans in Uzbekistan play an active role in the **social, political, and cultural life** of the country, making a valuable contribution to its **development and prosperity**. Among them are **Agrippina Shin**, former Minister of Preschool Education of the Republic of Uzbekistan (2017–2022) and current senator; **Valeriy Tyan**, senator; **Vitaliy Fen**, Ambassador of Uzbekistan to the Republic of Korea; and **Viktor Pak**, member of the Legislative Chamber of the Oliy Majlis and head of the Association.

As a product of social development, **ethnic communities** differ from each other in lifestyle, historical and cultural traditions, customs, and levels of economic development. The identity of each nation, regardless of its size, is primarily reflected in its **national consciousness and psychology**. In this sense, the **Korean mentality** possesses a unique philosophical worldview: it values patience in overcoming historical challenges, turns diligence into a life philosophy, emphasizes family harmony, and shows deep respect for ancestors. The Korean national consciousness is not merely an expression of ethnic identity—it represents a **set of philosophical principles that serve as a moral foundation** for social progress. Therefore, understanding the Korean mentality reveals not only the spiritual world of the nation but also its **socio-philosophical character**.

Research Methodology

More than **80 normative and legal documents** related to the improvement of **interethnic relations** in Uzbekistan have been adopted, including **2 Laws, 23 Presidential Decrees, 9 Presidential Resolutions, 43 Cabinet of Ministers' decisions and orders, and 3 resolutions of the Oliy Majlis**. The **legal and normative foundations of interethnic relations** are a crucial factor in ensuring the **stable development and social harmony** of society. The abundance of such laws and resolutions demonstrates not only the strengthening of the legal system but also the fact that **interethnic harmony is regarded as a priority direction of state policy**. In this regard, the system of legal acts is not only an administrative tool but also a phenomenon with **social and philosophical meaning**.

To ensure the **continuity of large-scale reforms**, the principle “*From the Strategy of Action to the Strategy of Development*” underlies the **Development Strategy of New Uzbekistan for 2022–2026**. In this document, **strengthening interethnic harmony and interreligious tolerance** is identified as one of the **priority objectives**. Consequently, the Development Strategy of New Uzbekistan also emphasizes the need to **enhance the system of state support for national cultural centers**, ensure **spiritual development**, and implement the **Concept of State Policy in the Field of Interethnic Relations** in a consistent manner.

Results and Discussion

In order to support national cultural centers, *Decree No. PF-5430 of May 4, 2018* was adopted, under which “**Friendship Houses**” were established in the Republic of Karakalpakstan and regional centers. These facilities provide **free office space** for national cultural centers. For instance, in 2019, with the participation of the Presidents of the Republic of Uzbekistan, *Shavkat Mirziyoyev*, and the Republic of Korea, *Moon Jae-in*, the **House of Korean Culture** was inaugurated.

This initiative marked a **new stage** not only in the cultural life of the Korean diaspora but also for all ethnic communities in the country. By their very nature, “Friendship Houses” embody the ideals of **interethnic harmony, tolerance, and cultural diversity**. Creating conditions for each national cultural center is not merely an act of preserving another culture—it represents the **strengthening of civic identity** and the promotion of **social stability** through the integration of multiple cultural traditions.

Since **April 2021**, the **chairpersons and deputy chairpersons** of national cultural centers operating across the country have been included in a system of **monthly remuneration** funded by the Public Fund under the Oliy Majlis. First and foremost, the laws and decrees regulating interethnic relations play a crucial role in shaping **legal culture** within society. They ensure that national identity develops based on **democratic values**, preserving **cultural diversity** while aligning it with the broader interests of society. Thus, the legal framework establishes **common rules of coexistence**, fostering communication and cooperation among representatives of various nationalities and ethnic groups.

Secondly, the development of interethnic relations based on legal norms contributes to the **principle of social justice** within society. Along with guaranteeing human rights and freedoms,

this process strengthens **social solidarity**. From a philosophical perspective, it enhances the **integrative potential of society**, creating conditions in which different national groups perceive themselves as part of a **single social organism**.

Thirdly, such a legal framework requires that interethnic relations be viewed **not merely as a political or administrative issue**, but as a **socio-philosophical process**. True interethnic harmony is not maintained solely through external regulation—it is sustained through **internal values** such as trust, respect, and tolerance formed within the consciousness of citizens.

At the initiative of the **President of Uzbekistan**, the institutional structure of the system governing interethnic relations and relations with foreign countries was **fundamentally reformed**. As a result, on **May 19, 2017**, a new state body—the **Committee on Interethnic Relations and Friendly Ties with Foreign Countries under the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan**—was established to implement a unified state policy in this field.

The Committee undertakes measures aimed at **promoting the principles of interethnic harmony, friendship, and solidarity**, supporting, coordinating, and encouraging social initiatives aimed at the development of **interethnic culture and cooperation**. It provides **practical and methodological assistance** to national cultural centers, supports their initiatives, and works to strengthen the feeling of a **single multinational family** among citizens regardless of their nationality, race, or religion, by implementing the principle: “*Uzbekistan is our common home.*”

Special attention has been paid to **educating youth in the spirit of tolerance, respect for national and universal values, and preservation of historical and cultural traditions**. This approach has contributed to shaping a **morally mature generation**—ideologically immune to nationalism and extremism, loyal to the ideals of independence, and dedicated to protecting and advancing Uzbekistan’s national interests.

The Committee is entrusted with the responsibility of **defending the interests** of national cultural centers and friendship societies within state institutions, coordinating their activities, and assisting in the **preservation and development** of the unique national traditions, customs, and ceremonies of various ethnic groups residing in the country.

In the West, the concept of *tolerance* emerged in the past centuries as part of ideas and theories about the coexistence of multiethnic populations within a single state. However, this notion has long been present in the mentality of the Uzbek people. Secondly, from an etymological, spiritual, and historical perspective, the term *bag‘rikenglik* (Uzbek for “tolerance”) is broader and richer in meaning than its Western counterpart *tolerantlik*. While *tolerance* in the Western sense often implies recognition and respect for others’ rights mainly out of social obligation and rational restraint, *bag‘rikenglik* in the Uzbek cultural context is rooted in national and religious spirituality, characterized by compassion, generosity, benevolence, empathy, and moral kindness.

It should be emphasized that the wide-ranging reforms being implemented in our country today serve to strengthen friendship among peoples and create a legal foundation for raising cooperation in all spheres in Central Asia to a qualitatively new level. These reforms also aim

to further develop relations with traditional partners and to strengthen Uzbekistan's participation in the activities of the United Nations and other global and regional organizations. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, new independent states experienced political and economic diversification. This process also brought noticeable changes to the lifestyle and cultural life of the *Koryo-saram* (ethnic Koreans in the former Soviet Union). The main question now is: to what extent will these Koreans diverge from one another in the future? At present, they still share more similarities than differences, but as each state makes its national language and culture an integral part of daily life, the degree of divergence remains an open issue.

Conclusion

Our view on strategies for preserving national identity for future generations is as follows: nearly 70 percent of the Koreans from the former Soviet Union live in Central Asia. The cultural proximity of the dominant Kazakh, Kyrgyz, and Uzbek peoples in the region increases the possibility of maintaining overall unity among the *Koryo-saram*. However, building and strengthening such a regional Korean community requires three essential conditions:

1. The diaspora itself must feel a strong need for national unity and consolidation;
2. The activities of Korean communities and associations in different countries must be harmonized;
3. The governments of the Central Asian republics must coordinate the work of Korean associations through mutual agreements.

The cooperation between Central Asian Korean associations has broad socio-cultural and philosophical significance. Such collaboration not only protects diaspora interests but also serves as a practical expression of self-awareness, the preservation of national memory, and the search for one's place in modern society. From a philosophical perspective, this cooperation addresses the issue of "harmonizing diversity within a unified society."

On one hand, Korean diaspora organizations in different countries strive to strengthen mutual ties in order to revive a shared historical memory and cultural heritage. On the other hand, they face the challenge of integrating into the political and social spaces of their respective host nations.

In a multiethnic society, the issue of ethnic integration is essentially about ensuring balance across all spheres of socio-economic life. This problem was already relevant during the Soviet era, when Koreans actively participated in science, local governance, art, culture, and various academic disciplines. Today, however, young Koreans tend to focus more on small business ventures, showing less interest in academic, cultural, or public service careers. Whereas the older generation produced many professors and scholars, among the younger Koreans aged 20–30, there is now little desire to pursue such professions, which are often perceived as less "economically profitable." This reflects the nation's evolving aspiration for material success.

Today, the Korean community must adapt to a new socio-economic and political landscape. The independent republics of the region are primarily inhabited by Turkic-speaking Muslim peoples whose national cultures and religious lives were restricted during the Soviet era. Now,

they are reviving their national languages and religious traditions, integrating them once again into daily life.

References:

1. O'zbekiston Respublikasi Konstitutsiyasi: yangi tahrir. — Toshkent: O'zbekiston, 2023
2. O'zbekiston Respublikasi Prezidentining “2022-2026-yillarga mo'ljallangan taraqqiyot strategiyasi to'g'risida”gi PF-60 sonli Farmoni 28.01.2022-yil.
3. Kim S., Pacher A. The Koryo saram in Uzbekistan and Their Relations to South Korea // Korean Diaspora – Central Asia, Siberia and Beyond / eds. J. Reckel, M. Schatz. – Göttingen: Universitätsverlag Göttingen, 2020. – P. 51
4. Корейская диаспора в Центральной Азии: история, культура и социальная жизнь / отв. ред. В.В. Нам, В.С. Хан. – Ташкент: Университет Пучон в Ташкенте, 2024. – С. 31
5. Koreya milliy madaniya markazi assoatsatsiyasi tomonidan 85 let istoriya koreytsev Uzbekistana T.
6. Toshev.A.B Yangi O'zbekistonda millatlararo toruvlik va diniy bag'rikenglikni ta'minlash. T.: 2024 “Tasvir” B-7 <https://lex.uz/ru/docs/-5570582?ONDATE=21.03.2025%2000>
7. O'zbekiston Respublikasi Prezidentining PF-5876- sonli Farmoni 15.11.2019 yil. <https://www.lex.uz/uz/docs/-4597662?ONDATE=08.11.2023>
8. <https://lex.uz/ru/docs/-5277501?utm>
9. <https://lex.uz/ru/docs/-5441590?utm>
10. 10.Мохият. – 2013. – 18 январ. – № 647