

Article

Consent Strategies: Cultural and Civilizational Paradigms for Communicative Rationality and Axiological Identity

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Abstract: Modern societies are increasingly becoming multinational and multi-religious. In such a situation, reaching public consensus in modern societies is critical for understanding the further development of the state and society, in particular, in multinational Kazakhstan. The research is aimed at identifying and interpreting approaches to understanding the idea of social consensus in the Western and Eastern traditional philosophical paradigms, represented by some of most influential philosophers. The study also identifies the role and place of traditional Kazakh philosophical thought and the possibility of its application in modern social relations. The strategies of harmony within the philosophical paradigms of the conditional mega-regions of the East and West are determined by a narrow segmentation of philosophical texts. In the course of the study, it is proposed to single out two basic consensus strategies, rational–pragmatic and spiritual–moral, or, in other words: communicative rationality and axiological identity.

Keywords: consensus; civilizational paradigm; cultural dialogue; comparative studies; axiology



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1. Introduction

The conflict of historical development accompanies human civilization throughout its entire existence. The formation of early forms of statehood and even late-tribal pre-state associations took place in conditions of significant, unavoidable ethnic, cultural, and religious differences between groups of people. Already, at the level of anthropological studies of the simplest social groups in different regions of the planet, researchers noted the critical level of conflict and, at the same time, the first searches for strategies of consent and coexistence [1].

The need for agreement as an axiological problem of paramount importance is noted by most ancient texts of philosophical content, regardless of the region of origin of the text [2]. The search for consensus gradually led to the formation of matrices and certain concepts that constitute forms of social behavior, which can differ significantly between civilizations and regions. Today, one cannot even say that the intention of seeking consent is universal because civilizations are being recorded that, perhaps, do not recognize the concept of consent as such [3,4].

By now, the problem of agreement—in the theoretical and practical sense—has become especially topical. This is due to the rapid increase in the world's population, the improvement and the spread of weapons of mass destruction, the need for normal, smoothly functioning economic and cultural exchanges, etc. The search for agreement in the 20th century acquired the form of a social experiment on a huge scale, as in the framework of the late imperial paradigm of European civilization, the Soviet planetary project, the modern globalized civilization, the developing modern Chinese project, etc. [5,6]. The problems of the dialogue of civilizations are highly relevant due to globalization and the mutual integrative influence of all civilizations which have become available to each other in a

single information space. The experience of individual national or regional matrices of consent can play a critical role in the development of new forms of cultural interaction.

Consequently, in the modern world, it is difficult to find a problem that is more urgent than the achievement of agreement between different cultural and civilizational paradigms. This is a task of extreme complexity and requires continuous work, making certain adjustments associated with the changing geopolitical landscape and the emergence of new realities in the economy, business, politics, and culture.

The issues of consent and dialogue in Kazakhstan are under the constant control of the government, and, in Kazakh philosophy, political science, religious studies, and sociology, the situation in interethnic and interfaith relations is monitored, and a serious theoretical understanding of the data is obtained.

2. Results

2.1. *The Concept of Consent in Western and Eastern Culture: A Historical Digression*

The study of the behavioral and cultural stratagems of the global dialogue between the East and West [7,8], substantiation of the concept of consent, and explication of the experience gained in national discourse can be carried out on the basis of those philosophical methods and interdisciplinary approaches that contribute to the development of an integral worldview, partnership of civilizations, and dialogue of cultures. In these approaches, the method of comparative analysis plays a special role, and the method of its implementation is the use of matrices of national models of interethnic harmony. In the modern world, most countries are multi-ethnic, multi-confessional entities [9]. The number of relatively mono-national ethnic or regional cultures is becoming smaller today [10]. The contact of East and West paradigms, different religions, and worldviews occurs in each country. This contact and its cultural artefacts and results become each individual country's or region's own unique characteristic, as each of them implements this contact in its own way [11].

The Eastern paradigm of concord is already clearly visible in the ancient Indian doctrine of the all-encompassing unity of God with the world and man. This doctrine was developed in the 19th century by the outstanding Russian philosopher Vladimir Solovyov, who called it the philosophy of unity. He wrote: "And in this land of slavery and division, a few isolated thinkers proclaim a new, unheard-of word: everything is one <...> Everything is one—this was the first word of philosophy, and this word for the first time proclaimed to humanity its freedom and fraternal unity <...> For if everything is one, if at the sight of every living being, I have to say to myself: this is yourself (tattwamasi), then where will the division of castes go, what will be the difference between a brahmin and a chandal? If everything is a modification of the one essence, and if I find this essence by going deeper into my own being, then where is there an external force that can suppress me, to what then will I be enslaved?" [12].

The origins of the idea of ontological unity are recorded earlier than in other sources in the texts of the Upanishads. This doctrine was based on the fundamental idea of the unity of Atman and Brahman, the kinship of human nature to the divine nature. This concept is typical of the mythological picture of the world, where the fundamental principle is the formula "all in One, One in all" or "all in all". The ancient doctrine of "You are That" (tattwamasi) expresses one of the first, in time and significance, fundamental principles of the identity of subject and object, man and the world, man and another person. "This identity... is not a vague hypothesis", stressed the great Indian philosopher Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, "but a necessary conclusion from all conscious thinking, feeling, and will <...>". From the very beginning, reflections on this unity of subject and object, on the existence of one central reality, all-pervading and all-encompassing, formed the doctrine of believers. Religious mysticism and deep piety attest to the truth of the great saying: "That you are", "Tat tvamasi" [13].

The study of the typological characteristics of the philosophical concept of consent in the Eastern tradition can be fruitfully conducted through the use of the Confucian presumption of the essential unity of the nature of all people. We know the fundamental

statement of Confucius (LUN Yu, XVII, 2); people are close to each other by nature but far from each other by habits [14]. This refers to the difference between human nature and acquired properties. Moreover, the differences between people do not concern the moral qualities and nature of the person as a whole. The appeal to the common nature of people in the Chinese tradition already implies a social, communicative community, which is the basis for mutual understanding, humanity [14].

According to the views of Confucius, developed later by Zhu XI, people are one by nature. This unity is not established by reflexive regression over one's own nature, but is recognized as existing initially, before any reflection on the problem of unity and the differences of people. The common nature of people, as it were, gradually and spontaneously pushes them to communicate, come closer, and unite [15].

The Arab world also has had an interesting experience in understanding the problem of consent. This is, for example, al-Farabi's doctrine of intercultural dialogue: "The common things that all the inhabitants of a virtuous city should know", the thinker pointed out, —are the following. First, they need to know the Root cause and all its attributes; then—things existing separately from matter, and inherent in each of them the attributes and also the occupied level up to the active mind and the activities of each of them; further, they must know the heavenly substance and specific to each of the attributes; then there are the natural bodies located below these substances, and how they are formed and destroyed..." [16]. Thus, al-Farabi emphasizes that the residents of a virtuous city should have a unified worldview. The association of people in al-Farabi has a pronounced epistemological connotation; it is a unity due to a common correct knowledge that forms a common view of things.

The unified worldview here is not totalitarian, like a concept imposed externally on the recipients which they must accept under pressure or for the sake of some kind of solidarity, in the understanding of Habermas [17]. The unification of worldviews has a religious–epistemological nature; the Lord is the only source of everything, his unity presupposes the existence of the only reliable knowledge associated with him that can be known. Correct knowledge guarantees the unity of the thoughts of those who know the truth [16,18]. This implies that a single worldview must organically synthesize other worldviews, placing them in their places in a certain general picture of the world. Also, a unified worldview should be built on the basis of proper education and development of human virtues. Since the source of virtue is the Creator, and it is natural for him, then correct knowledge should lead to virtue and mutual understanding [18].

However, the cultural and civilizational development of another conditional cultural and historical area—the West—has so far been dominated by the opposite concept, which is reflected in most philosophical schools. It consists of emphasizing the primacy of the individual over the general. The importance of individual choice and the constitutionalization of the individual in society date back to the period of ancient Greek philosophy. The importance of communication in this case is described by Aristotle in *Rhetoric*; the ontological sovereignty of the individual from a certain general requires the use of skillful logical and rhetorical means of establishing consensus or proof of what is proper and fair in society [19]. Consensus requires communication and a law that shapes relationships between individuals. Further, social theorists Locke and Hobbes also focused on law and the state as a means of arranging interaction between individuals, each of whom strives for their own good, and, therefore, their interaction must be established by some external effort [20]. The difference from the Eastern paradigm presented earlier lies in the creation of tools external to the subjective personality to achieve consensus: laws, the art of communication, reaching agreements, suppression, etc.

For example, S. Kierkegaard's emphasis on the significance of individual experience, J. Berkeley's solipsistic intentions in philosophy [21], and M. Stirner's [22] openly individualistic attitudes are well known. Individualism is very clearly manifested in the philosophy of the United States, especially in so-called transcendentalism. Its representatives criticized a society steeped in utilitarianism and disfiguring the human person, who is valuable to this society solely as an object of benefit; however, American transcendentalism also contained a

number of theses that limited and undermined the transcendentalists' own principles. Thus, in the teachings of the recognized leader of the transcendentalists, Ralph Waldo Emerson, too little space is given to the communication of people. The head of this ideological trend believed that the law of human development is revealed not in communication, but in just the opposite—in solitude, in avoiding society. Cooperation, says Emerson [23] in his essay "Society and Solitude", is short-lived; it is like the temporary cooperation of a ship's crew.

As for today, unity is usually interpreted in the spirit of postmodernism—as coexistence not so much in unity itself but in difference and diversity [24,25]. The deconstruction of ontological entities proposed by Jacques Derrida, like other practices of postmodern thinking, eliminates the very possibility of formulating axiomatic norms of discourse such as "unity" and provides endless space for discursive interpretations [26]. Most studies set more practical goals of achieving philosophical concepts aimed at solving social, political, and even environmental problems of our time within the framework of the already existing general axiological view of the problem of unity described above [4,6]. At the same time, it is indicated that this type of combination, a combination of various individual elements, is nothing more than a non-rigid type of unity. However, it often turns out that postmodernism, in fact, denies unity to diversity and emphasizes the actual lack of unity. This is unity, especially if it concerns the unification of people, which is desirable to achieve, but which is not achieved. It is not an ontologically given unity which can be revealed by a certain philosophical reduction of one kind or another but an aspiration to the desirable, which is not guaranteed [11,27]. We can say that this approach is a hypertrophy of all previous historical interpretations of diversity. The philosophy of postmodernism exposes a serious and global problem; it reveals a symptom of the anarchic state in which humanity finds itself today after the actual collapse of the liberal philosophical project [17,27].

2.2. *Two Strategies of Consent and Their Representation in the Culture of Kazakhstan*

In the context of a conventional common Eastern and conditionally Western philosophical paradigms of understanding ontological and social unity and the problem of integrating different cultures and behaviors, we can, in our opinion, distinguish two opposing strategies. The commonality of paradigms within each mentioned cultural mega-region can be specified based on the general concepts that are highlighted above, which have common cultural and historical roots and are well correlated with each other from a hermeneutical point of view, based on the analysis of the relevant texts [3,28–30]. The first of these strategies goes back to the religious–sensual inner experience of human unity with higher forces and through them with other people, as is clearly seen in the example of ancient Indian philosophy and in the later post-Vedic teachings of Vedanta and Muslim mysticism and Sufi schools, whose ideas have had a huge impact on the worldview and philosophical discourse of the peoples of Central Asia, in particular, and of Kazakhstan [30,31]. The second strategy is to try to establish harmony in a society of atomized individuals or between opposing cultural *topos* through dialogue and various concessions. It is believed that an agreement can be reached on the basis of rational and logical arguments and the creation of the necessary external conditions that suit both sides of the consensus. This is typical of ancient contract theory and especially of today's liberal discourse [22,26,29].

As noted by the classics of philosophy, in particular, the writing of I. Kant, the difference between theoretical and practical reason stems from their different applications and not their basis on different reasons [32]. The rational is only more characteristic of the West, since, there, philosophy has developed powerfully as a form of rationalistic attitude to the world, and non-rational forms have become more prominent in Eastern religious and mystical teachings.

Thus, there are two strategies of agreement: sensual–spiritual or religious–moral on the one hand, and pragmatic–rational on the other. We suggest that both of these stratagems can be explicated in the form of the following schemes or "formulas".

The scheme of the first type of consent looks something like this: consent = irrational sympathy, love—openness to each other—knowledge of each other—moving forward in the

same direction. The scheme of the second type of consent is different: consent = dialogue—knowledge of each other—external restraining and encouraging conditions—maintaining the status quo of both sides of the dialogue. And, if the second type of philosophy of consent is well known and thoroughly studied by social philosophers, cultural scientists, and political thinkers, the first one, as a rule, remains in the shadows and is studied very little.

The second type of consent is represented in the Kazakh culture very widely in literature, cinema, and folklore and supports folk's everyday behavioral tradition [33–35]. This is due to the deep influence in modern Kazakhstan of both Islam and the traditional way of life and values, as well as the extremely high authority of traditional philosophical thought represented by Abai [31].

Communicative rationality provides the procedure for implementing democracy and ultimately serves as a justification for the strategy of building a new world order, a new system of global world order. Moreover, the concept of J. Habermas logically follows the position formulated by him: "...States will only begin to align their traditional foreign policy with the imperatives of world domestic policy if the world Organization can use its own armed forces and police functions under its own command" [17].

In the culture of Kazakhstan, the second type of consent is represented mainly by political and administrative discourse, as the country is developing towards the realization of human rights and freedoms and supports international legislation, which is based precisely on the conventionally Western vision of consensus [4,5]. Within the framework of this discourse, modern Kazakh political science and philosophical academic thought are formed [36].

3. Discussion

In the discourse about consent, it is usually based on communicative rationality, on mental representation; communicating more closely, we get to know each other better, and, therefore, we come to an agreement. However, the very word "consensus 'means' coincidence of feelings". This means that, if individuals and cultures do not have an initial sympathetic, disinterested interest in each other, and an agreement in understanding the highest human values, then dialogue may not lead to agreement, and knowledge may not provide consensus. It may even provide the opposite; by opening up to each other, people or cultures only provoke more discord and mutual alienation.

Today, the problem of consent is complicated by the fact that one of the strategies of cultural and civilizational development tends to dominate the other. "Universal" is applied only to that which is characteristic of the culture and civilization of the West. But consent cannot be built on the basis of the subordination of one person to another, one culture to another; their equality, their equally dignified and free coexistence, is necessary. In place of "panhuman" should be "universal" [33].

In the case of considering the proposed concept of social consensus, somewhat abstract ideas about the philosophy of East and West can indeed be divided according to features sufficient for unambiguous differentiation of these two directions of philosophical thought in the context of the study. These signs in relation to social consensus can be a method of achieving social harmony. For the conditional East, this is an internal achievement of harmony with a certain ontologically given general for all people and, through it, the achievement of a natural consensus without concessions. For the conditional West, this is the creation of a system of connections external to the personal ontology of the individual, which makes it possible to achieve a common good through inevitable concessions and gains [19,20].

Objectively, none of the ways to reach agreement can be absolutized, especially since there are no adequate historical reasons for this. The Western version of the consent strategy has a history of application and thorough scientometric study, which is why it can be objectively criticized. The Eastern strategy of consent in the aspect presented in our study has not yet been the subject of careful study, at least in Western scientific thought. However, the Eastern strategy of consent has a clear manifestation in the activities of many thinkers and philosophical schools that have played an objectively important role in achieving national consent and in the development of individual countries in Central

Asia, the Middle East, the Far East, etc. [6,11,18]. In particular, the traditional philosophical discourse of Kazakhstan is, according to the authors, one of the most pronounced variants of this Eastern strategy of reaching agreement.

Turning to the classics of Kazakh philosophical thought can serve to more clearly identify the structure and content of the concept of uniting people and reaching agreement within the framework of the Eastern strategy of consent, since the central, system-forming idea of Kazakh philosophizing is the ethical idea. There is extensive literature about this [31,34–37]. The most complete implementation of this philosophy is represented in Kazakhstan by Abai and Shakarim. The essence of Abai's ideas is expressed in his concept of Nurly Akyl, which means "enlightened, spiritualized mind", i.e., a mind that thinks positively, embodying the highest moral principles. Shakarim puts forward as a key principle of his philosophy the concept of conscientious reason, which is fundamentally similar to the concept of Nurly Akyl described by Abai [38]. At the same time, he rightly believes that the presence of reason in itself does not guarantee its spiritual (moral and socio-ethical) application. From the awareness of this conflict grows Shakarim's attempt to supplement the mind with ethics, to spiritualize it, and to emphasize the primacy of spiritual consent in comparison with rational and factor approaches.

The concept of consent in the history of Kazakhstan from the perspective of the need for a planetary ethics of consent is of particular interest. Of great importance for the formation of authentic basic principles of consent is the appeal to the call of Abai "Adam bol!", which incorporates in its content the experience of human harmony with the Almighty, as well as the experience of Western rationality and the values of general Eurasian culture [39]. The concept of consent, which is characteristic of Kazakh philosophical thought, is deeply integrated with the age-old cultural and civilizational ties of Kazakhstan in the socio-historical context. This concept demonstrates its special place in the general historical, philosophical discourse of Eurasian civilizations, which offers us a new perspective on the Eurasian doctrine of L. N. Gumilyov, which emphasizes the constructive nature of interaction between the Forest and Steppe civilizations [40].

4. Materials and Methods

The research focused on identifying, by means of comparative analysis of the corpus of previously studied texts of representatives of the philosophy schools of European, American, and Muslim traditions, common ideas and contexts related to strategies for reaching agreement between individuals and societies with different ethical, religious, and political views. For the research, a relatively narrow segment of philosophical thought was chosen, represented by works that explore the problems of agreement between heterogeneous, disjointed, significantly different social and value systems.

In addition to the comparative approach, this study used axiological approaches, the method of historicism, hermeneutical analysis (in terms of the deep meaning of the concept of "consent"), and also relied on empirical data related to issues of public consent in modern Kazakhstan.

Limitations of the Study

The study did not conduct a detailed hermeneutical or comparative analysis of historical teachings that played a significant role in the formation of philosophical thought in large cultural and social systems, for example, the Eurasian continent as a whole. Within each region or school of philosophy, one can find numerous features that have been reduced in this study to the most general principles, the existence of which is agreed by most researchers in the hermeneutical corpus of philosophical texts of these regions. Also, the study did not address in detail the processes of mutual intersection and the influence of various consent matrices that exist in the mega-regions of the West and East, since this interaction is too complex and requires a separate extensive study.

5. Conclusions

The concept of consent, by definition, should concentrate the experience of various cultural and civilizational paradigms. Therefore, for the successful solution of the problem of consent, it is of great value to study the stratagems of the global dialogue between East and West, followed by study of the use of the experience gained in national discourse. The central role in these studies is played by the method of comparative analysis, which, in turn, contributes to the promotion of national models of interethnic harmony on the world stage. Eastern matrices of consent are historically associated with the concept of the unity of man and God in ancient India, with the Confucian presumption of the essential unity of the nature of all people, with the ideas of intercultural dialogue in the works of al-Farabi. As for the history of Western socio-philosophical thought and social practice, it is dominated by intentions for individualism, fundamental differences between people and cultures, and, accordingly, a non-rigid unity that presupposes the freedom of individuals. In postmodernism, these attitudes find their extreme embodiment. Here, the idea of the significance of diversity as opposed to totalizing forms of unity is hypertrophied.

In general, it can be argued that there are two strategies of agreement: communicative rationality (agreement, agreement) and axiological identity (unanimity, coincidence in values). They are opposite to each other, but, for this reason, they require their own harmonious synthesis, the model of which can be found in Kazakh philosophical thought, which emphasizes the status of the mind that thinks positively and embodies the highest moral principles.

One of the models of such a strategy of consent can be drawn from the history of Kazakh thought. This model has already played a significant role in the consolidation of the Kazakh ethnic group and the state and can be used as an axiological basis of modern social practice. In the future, it is important to study the main principles of conciliation procedures in the Kazakh customary law to analyze the factors of consent in the formation of a unified Kazakh state and the implementation of the idea of consent in the Soviet period with all its pros and cons.

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