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## **Philosophical Approach to Solving Socio-Political Issues in Kazakhstan in the Context of Modern Challenges to Society: A Theoretical and Methodological Review of the Problem**

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**Abstract:** The socio-political development of modern Kazakhstan is an extremely important object for research since this country is the leader of the Central Asian region, a certain “trendsetter” in the field of legal relations and social transformations regulation. The purpose of the article is to analyse the current challenges to Kazakhstan's society through the prism of philosophical concepts and to provide suggestions on possible vectors of response to the studied challenges. For this investigation appropriate methods were used. The analysis, synthesis, and dialectological methods as well as metaphysical and axiological methods were used to conduct the study. As a result of referring to the theoretical framework, a total of 40 positions of modern and relevant scientific literature were analysed. It made possible the providing of the necessary theoretical basis for the study. Based on the content analysis of contemporary literature, the current socio-political challenges to Kazakhstan's society were characterised. Possible ways to address the socio-political problems of the Republic of Kazakhstan through the prism of philosophical understanding of modern democratic trends and civil society were explored. The main attention was paid to the study of the realisation of socio-political problems of the Republic of Kazakhstan through the development of democratic institutions (based on the analysis of the basic concepts of A. Tocqueville, R. Putnam, R. Dahl). The conclusions emphasise the important problems of the socio-political development of Kazakhstan (traditionalism, corruption, nepotism, economic challenges, and negative manifestations of digitalisation). It is noted that the modern social

policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan should be aimed at reforming and modernising society and its legal consciousness.

**Keywords:** Republic of Kazakhstan, democratization, political and civil development, society, challenges

## **Introduction**

The current economic and political development in Kazakhstan specifies the need for certain social transformations that would harmonise the societies' development with the modern requirements for the information society and its constituent elements. First of all, it is about globalisation and related challenges, including security and military ones (Behera, 2021). Similarly, the factor of digitalisation deserves attention, as, when combined with education, administration systems, medicine, and other important sectors, it demonstrates the need for transformations in both public attitudes and appropriate changes to legal documentation and laws that in times of active digitalisation must meet modern requirements for such a sensitive area (Zabikh, 2020). In general, this issue has already been the subject of separate analysis and additional research, but dynamic changes in the foreign policy situation and the emergence of new digital tools in regulation indicate the relevance of further consideration, since external conditions are variable and need to be defined and interpreted in accordance with the current state of the problem.

### *Research Problem*

Particularly, an important area for further research is the issue of philosophical understanding of the changes taking place in Kazakh society and the need for its further modernisation. The importance of this issue is undeniable, as it also involves the ontological and axiological guidelines determination in order to develop the modern social models and determine the possibility of their application in Kazakhstan in terms of Westernization or Orientation. Certain philosophical models and their implementation will therefore require the solution of socio-political issues, especially given the current trends of a new understanding of humanism and anthropocentrism as distinctive features of the relationship between the state and society.

### *Research Focus*

The research and coverage of an extremely problematic (as for the twenty-first century) field - the humanities - requires not only the usual comprehensive understanding of current challenges but also the depth of their worldview comprehension, namely a reflection at all levels and the formation of certain general conclusions as possible recommendations for action. For this reason, in order to understand the depth of social transformations, it is extremely important to use the philosophical approach that became the basis for the relevant research. Its use will make it possible to analyse the problems and challenges faced by Kazakh society in the twenty-first century based on engaging and considering the relevant theoretical works.

### *Research Aim and Research Questions*

Therefore, the purpose of the study is to analyse the current challenges to Kazakh society from the philosophical point of view and to propose possible vectors of response to them. Accordingly, the main objectives of this work are:

1. To conduct a content analysis of modern literature on the topic;
2. To describe the current challenges of implementing socio-political aspects in Kazakhstan;

3. To study the key aspects of solving socio-political problems of the Republic of Kazakhstan through the development of democracy and civil society (based on fundamental philosophical approaches).

### **Literature Review**

Contemporary researchers have repeatedly addressed the problem of using philosophical approaches in order to understand certain political and social aspects. Tamborini (2020) characterised the social aspects of life development based on the analysis of modern technological and scientific approaches. The impact of globalisation on the development of social institutions is characterised in the studies of Skare & Riberio Soriano (2021); Renn (2020). Strategic issues of economic policy development in the context of globalisation challenges are outlined in Bilyaze (2022). A comparative analysis of the development of modern society against the background of globalisation and de-globalisation processes is carried out in Behera (2021). The significance of digitalisation in the system of development of social aspects of human existence was characterised by Porokhovskiy (2019). The key aspects of the formation of the modern information society are outlined in the concept of Stephanidis & Antona (2022). The phenomenon of political instability in the modern world is defined in Sironi & Tornari (2013). At the same time, Schiek (2022) studied the peculiarities of the formation of political stability in Kazakhstan through the prism of depoliticisation of participation and consultative ideology. Similar issues are also addressed in Terzyan's (2022) study. Some manifestations of effective policy-making in Kazakhstan are highlighted in Insebayeva & Insebayeva (2021). Doszhan (2015) characterised the phenomenon of progress through the prism of Kazakh philosophy analysis. Kanagatov et al. (2013) characterised the role of tolerance in modern Kazakh society based on philosophical and psychological understanding.

The methodological basis of this study is based on the thorough works of theorists of philosophical and political thought. Particularly, certain concepts of democratic development of society by Dahl (1963); Dahl (2007) were used. The phenomenon of explaining the role and significance of civil society is contained in the studies of Campbell, Putnam, & Bayne (1984); Putnam (2017). R. Putnam is known for the concept of "social capital". According to Putnam, a powerful modern society should be characterised by elite political relations based on trust and cooperation. Together, the scholar defines these elements as "social capital." Through the participation in various public organisations, individuals acquire social capital and are able to use it to strengthen democratic principles in the state's governance system.

The concepts of the formation and development of democracy in different areas are formed in the fundamental work of De Tocqueville (2009). This is a historical and political treatise "Democracy in America" by the French politician A. de Tocqueville, written under the impression of a trip to the United States and Canada (Tocqueville & Tocqueville, 2018). Today, the work still has not lost its relevance and is used in the development and study of the main theoretical and methodological issues of the implementation of democratic institutions in certain regions (De Tocqueville, 2009).

At the same time, in order to characterise the main aspects of solving socio-political issues in Kazakhstan, it is important analysing modern philosophical theories on understanding the future (primarily transhumanism and posthumanism). These theories determine the key role of globalisation and technological progress. The peculiarities of the use of posthumanist ideas and their importance for the transformation of modern human existence are characterised in the studies of Gourlay (2020); Cargas, (2019). It should be noted that posthumanism is aimed at the "inner disclosure and expansion" of the Human (Anthropos) (Llamas Covarrubias, 2020). Although contemporary posthumanists focus on the unquestioning faith in technology, they also address the issue of the liberation of oppressed

peoples (Malapi Nelson, 2019). Accordingly, modern adherents of this theory emphasise that modern people have every right to interfere with natural processes (Dovhan, & Mikhailina, 2021; Goodley, 2020). At the same time, some ethical issues of implementing the concepts of transhumanism are characterised in the studies of Osiński (2021); Guerreiro et al. (2021).

## **Research Methodology**

### *General Background*

The research is a theoretical and fundamental work, as it involves the introduction of new theoretical knowledge and is based on the interpretation and use of previous studies. This led to the use of an appropriate research methodology. Through the prism of the used analysis, it was possible to divide the main subject of the study into smaller parts (characterisation of current challenges to the implementation of socio-political aspects in Kazakhstan, the analysis of the main aspects of solving socio-political problems of the Republic of Kazakhstan through the development of democracy and civil society (based on fundamental philosophical approaches). By means of synthesis, these elements were combined, and the author formed his own concept for further solving socio-political issues in Kazakhstan based on the comprehension of certain philosophical ideas. Despite this, the study was based on special methods of philosophical cognition: dialectical and metaphysical ones. Particularly, the use of the metaphysical method contributed to the study of the main internal features of social processes in the concept of the interconnection of globalisation trends.

The axiological method was also important since it was necessary taking into account the ethical factors that influence the solution of socio-political issues within the framework of posthumanist and transhumanist doctrines.

## **Research Results**

### **Current challenges facing Kazakh society**

The experience of the Republic of Kazakhstan is relevant for the countries of Central Asia, as it is the most influential state in the region in the socio-political and economic dimensions. At the same time, the current development of this country demonstrates certain crisis phenomena that need to be addressed and improved. An increased production and export of mineral resources has slowed down the economic growth, while the depreciation of the national currency has led to the levelling of economic achievements of the early 21st century and the aggravation of the overall socio-economic situation in Kazakhstan. The standard of living of many citizens remains low, the poverty has increased, and the unemployment, especially among young people, has become a significant problem. Approximately one in ten young people in Kazakhstan is not engaged in either educational or professional activities, and their total number reaches several hundred thousand people.

Significant differences in regional development are a major challenge for the country. The main economic centers are the oil-producing regions in the west of Kazakhstan and the three largest cities, i.e., Astana (formerly Nur-Sultan), Almaty, and Shymkent. The rest of the country's land has not had corresponding economic achievements. In recent years, there has been a decline in labour productivity due to ineffective governance, widespread corruption and nepotism, and the judiciary weakness. Migration challenges have also become more acute, with massive emigration from the country (Alimzhanova et al., 2015). Businessmen, skilled professionals, workers in creative industries, and young people are leaving the country in search of a better life. In the context of economic problems, the main task of the country's leadership in the coming years is to ensure social support for the population.

One of the obstacles to the modernisation of Kazakh society, its consolidation, and the formation of a single political nation is the tendency towards intra-social differentiation and the gradual revival of a traditionalist worldview, which complicates the opportunities for the formation of national identity in Kazakhstan (Altayev & Imanbayeva, 2021). This phenomenon has contributed to the actualisation of historical memory about the nomadic lifestyle of the Kazakhs and the associated tribalism. First of all, the Kazakh ethnic group traditionally consisted of three zhuzes: Senior, Middle, and Junior. Each zhuz consisted of large tribes that included numerous clans and subclans. First of all, kinship ties played an important role in the everyday life of the Kazakhs. Representatives of individual clans had the highest priority in socio-political, cultural, and economic influences on the life of traditional Kazakh society. Financial and other resources, property, knowledge, and information were distributed through kinship ties. Therefore, kinship relations became crucial for social status, authority, reputation, etc.

In modern Kazakh society, family ties still have their influence. There are situations when a person's career growth depends not on his or her moral and business qualities, but on their family background. For example, some researchers have noted that high positions are often held by people with questionable professional qualities, but who are relatives of influential people whose immunity is ensured by the protection of the family clan and the community. Manifestations of tribalism, corruption, and nepotism are ubiquitous, although they are generally condemned by Kazakh society. At the same time, such manifestations of family and tribal ties are felt in various spheres of social life.

It is worth noting that Kazakhstan has a high protest potential. The main reasons that can lead to provocations include a high level of social injustice, dissatisfaction with semi-authoritarian models of clan governance, lack of fair and just elections, social and economic hardship, and inability to achieve justice in state bodies, including courts, prosecutors, and police, corruption, and nepotism among the ruling elite (Zabikh, 2020).

The COVID-19 pandemic and the digitalisation processes have posed another challenge to Kazakhs. Under the pretext of convenience, we are deliberately encouraged to use more and more devices that collect and analyse the given information. There is even a separate technological trend - the Internet of Things - which aims to fully inform the living space. The work in this area is active and very promising (Skare & Riberio Soriano, 2021). The pace at which these devices were absorbed, as well as the speed at which their characteristics were evolving - miniaturisation and increased power - is staggering. There is no doubt about the benefits these devices provide - they provide convenience, reliable communication channels, and thanks to statistical machine learning algorithms, new aspects about the personalities can be discovered. However, living in such an informatised society implies that all personal history is stored and can be accessed by malicious actors, be they semi-authoritarian governments or criminals.

The next risk associated with information technology is the threat of cybercrime and cyberwarfare, which is a real threat to global security (Stephanidis & Antona, 2022). A technical expert who discovers security vulnerability will have extraordinary power (Yushkevych, 2019). People will have the tools to control weapons, hospitals, and thus the lives of millions of people. They will be able to manipulate bank accounts, transportation equipment, and many other aspects. If the criminal uses a smart approach, it will allow to systematically inflicting damage without physically being at the scene of the crime. With each immersion in the field of informatisation, more and more valuable data in the information space is stored, thereby exposing everything one owns to potential danger (Skare & Riberio Soriano, 2021).

Thus, the challenges facing modern Kazakh society can be represented in the form of a table (See Table 1).

Table 1.

*The main challenges in modern Kazakh society*

<b>№</b>	<b>Problem</b>	<b>Definition</b>
1.	Traditionalism	The revival of historical forms of existence in Kazakh society is also associated with the actualisation of negative phenomena - the influence of family and origin on the place in society, rather than skills and professionalism.
2.	Nepotism	The spread of the influence of individual families and family-based appointments.
3.	Corruption	Widespread corrupt practices of illicit enrichment, lack of effective mechanisms to counteract the existence of such schemes.
4.	Economic challenges	Differences in the development of certain regions, the lagging behind of other territories, which leads to an outflow of young people and their departure from the country.
5.	Digital challenges	The danger of using modern digital technologies against society.

*Source: created by the authors of the article*

Thus, responding to these problems will require efforts from Kazakh society. Appropriate solutions are possible in the area of society's democratisation.

**The realization of socio-political problems of the Republic of Kazakhstan through the development of democracy and civil society (based on the analysis of the main concepts of A. Tocqueville, R. Putnam, R. Dahl).**

The socio-political problems of the Republic of Kazakhstan are among the most important, complex and urgent issues that affect many areas. Today, more than 19 million people live in Kazakhstan. It is predicted that by the end of the twenty-first century, the population of this country will grow to 50 million. At the same time, politics and the public must be on the same plane. Accordingly, the increased attention of scientists to the study of socio-political aspects is due to the process of politicisation of all spheres of public life.

The need to form and develop the social policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan in the context of reforming and modernising modern society is caused not only by socio-economic, mental (spiritual), but also by political factors: the establishment of moral and political maturity, consciousness and scientific outlook can only be ensured as a result of an uncompromising analysis of modern philosophical trends that contribute to the progress towards a civilized, democratic and legal society (Dovhan & Mikhailina, 2021; Catena, 2017).

On the other hand, the modern social policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan should actively contribute to the implementation of the main tasks of reforming, modernising the society, forming legal consciousness and legal education of Kazakhstanis. Kazakhstani laws, expressing some concepts of social humanism and ideas of justice, influence the social and political life of the country (Zabikh, 2020). This influence is due to several factors, including the democratic nature of public policy and the expression of the interests of the entire Kazakh multicultural and multinational people. Accordingly, modern Kazakhstan's social policy should act as the most important factor in educating people, forming political and legal consciousness, values of humanism, and democracy. The main factor that contributes to the development of social consolidation of the conscious community of Kazakhstan is the development of democracy as a social condition and political technology. The phenomenon of democracy as a socio-political system in its various historical manifestations contributes to the

emergence and development of civil society. What is the essence of democracy in the context of solving contemporary socio-political issues?

The American philosopher and political scientist R. Dahl characterised the main advantages of democracy that are directly aimed at developing respect for human dignity and increasing social unity in society:

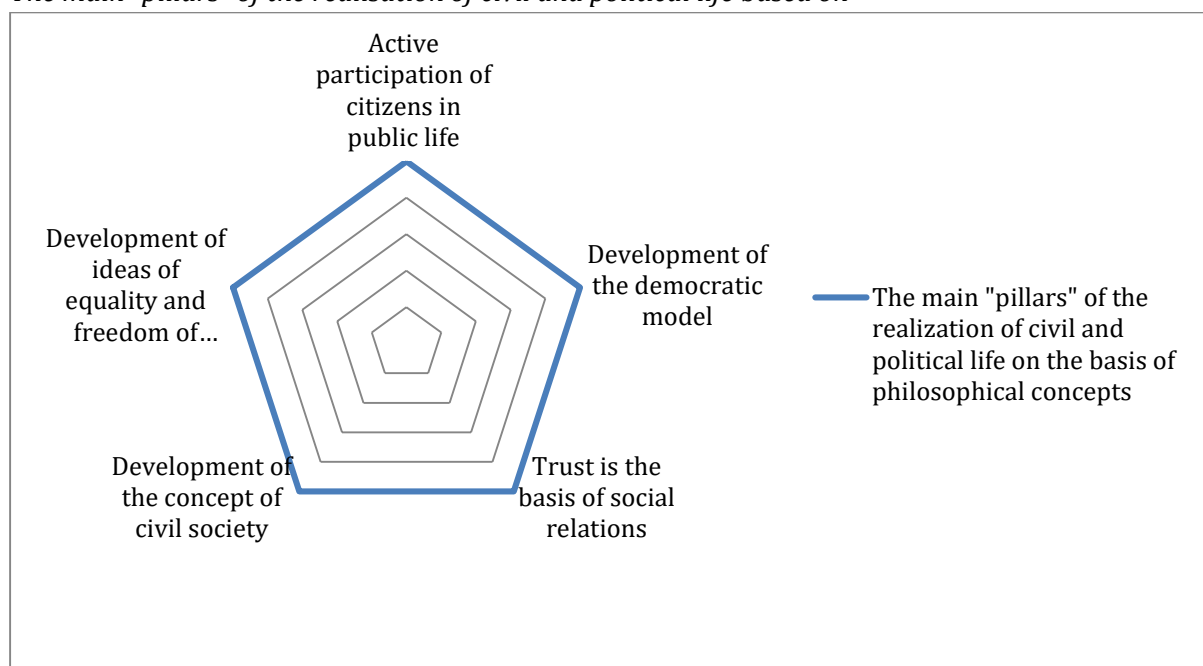
1. The political equality;
2. The freedom of self-determination of individuals;
3. The observance of important human rights and freedoms on the path of human development;
4. The moral autonomy of humanity;
5. The development of the individual, protection of their key interests;
6. The pursuit of peace and prosperity (Dahl, 1983).

Accordingly, it is important not only noting the significance and importance of civil society on the way to developing democratic aspects of the implementation of socio-political issues but also revealing its effective functional capabilities. According to the nineteenth-century French philosopher A. Tocqueville, the key function of civil society is to meet the material, social and spiritual needs of individuals to the fullest extent possible (de Tocqueville, 2009). This aspect should be the key in the implementation of civil and political issues by modern governments.

In addressing a number of socio-political issues in Kazakhstan, modern civil society organisations play an important role in the context of civil society development. According to R. Putnam (the author of the concept of “social capital”), through the participation in civil society organisations, individuals gain social capital and can use it to strengthen key democratic foundations in the regulation of political life. At the same time, the development of democratisation in modern society is possible through reforms at the local level (Garrett & Putnam, 2020) (See Figure 1).

Figure 1.

*The main “pillars” of the realisation of civil and political life based on*



*Source: created by the authors of the article*

Citizens in the modern civil society of Kazakhstan should be characterised by active participation in social and political affairs, and membership in civil society is associated with the spirit of public good to a much greater extent than in a society aimed at dividing profits. The development of the principles of trust, solidarity, and tolerance is the basis for the implementation of social policy in any modern state.

At the same time, addressing the digital challenges facing societies (including Kazakhstan) actualises the problem of using other modern philosophical concepts to respond. One of the popular areas of philosophical reflection is transhumanism (Malapi Nelson, 2019). It encompasses a variety of positions and nuances in the academic, legal, political, and economic spectrum. It is an international cultural and intellectual movement that promotes the use of science and technology to improve the physical and mental characteristics of people. Transhumanism is at the heart of contemporary anthropological and socio-economic changes that generate growing social and institutional uncertainty (Osiński, 2021). It also raises many societal issues. Transhumanism tries to solve real problems, the philosophical aspect of which is expressed in the awareness of new types of relations between subject and object, between humanity and nature, between man and man. Thus, transhumanism raises a number of new ethical issues and questions (Guerreiro et al., 2021). One such problem is the expansion of social inequality, which leads to social injustice.

Obviously, the theory of transhumanism covers a wide range of sciences, including philosophy, sociology, anthropology, and cultural studies, and does not leave aside legal science. Depending on this, some of the rights and obligations included in the current legal status of a person, enshrined in national legislative and international acts of Kazakhstan, may become irrelevant, and new rights and obligations of the future will appear instead. The idea of human life and health will also change (Llamas Covarrubia, 2020). As a result, there are discussions among members of society about whether such changes are necessary for people and what the limits of their implementation should be. For example, the Council of Europe, the European Union, other international organisations, and the world's leading states are constantly engaged in discussions and research on these issues. This experience can be useful for Kazakhstan.

The rapid development of new technologies in the modern world is revolutionary and can not only change everyday life but also profoundly transform social existence. It is worth noting that transhumanism is an evolving worldview or, more precisely, a system of worldviews, as transhumanists often disagree on many issues. Transhumanism seeks to preserve universal respect for the observance of human rights and freedoms. Ethics is seen here as the unity of the universal and the individual. Another important issue that arises in the context of the possibilities for human improvement is the problem of freedom (Goodley, 2020). Particularly, the issue of “personal autonomy” is raised in the philosophy of Immanuel Kant in the context of moral autonomy. According to Kant, an autonomous subject is one who uses people’s reason with determination and courage. Autonomy is a property of the individual subject that is the basis of human freedom and morality. According to Kant, a “free” person is one who can determine his or her will with the help of reason (and not just feelings).

Within the concept of transhumanism, the understanding of human freedom takes on new forms. There is a need to study the status of individual autonomy, in particular the ethical basis for preserving the unmodified status of the individual in the context of the project of human improvement. Already today, Kazakhstan is experiencing the need for responsible choices, repeated choices that will require constant justification and implementation, in the context of the discovery of new, increasingly impressive, and significant, but at the same time increasingly risky technical possibilities for “improving” a person and the environment where people live.

## **Discussion**

The modern research shows that the development of democratic ideas and the concept of civil society are important trends in the formation of social policy (Putnam, 2017; Garrett & Putnam, 2020). According to Putnam (2017), the development of civil society ideas contributes to the effective functioning of the government: a strong society means a strong economy; a strong society means a strong state. Accordingly, modern researchers continue supporting the concept of civil society as the basis for the development of modern states (Thompson, 2021).

On the other hand, some attention should be paid to other aspects of the formation of Kazakh society. Particularly, in the second half of the 1990s, Kazakh society was ideologically split due to different attitudes towards the first results of liberal democratic reforms (Altayev & Imanbayeva, 2021). For some people, liberal guidelines became a priority, but other members of society did not perceive them as a tool for social transformation. Kazakh society, which has a deep tradition of collectivism and solidarity, has proven to be favourable to the ideas of social liberalism (Alimzhanova, Aldamberganova, & Gabitov, 2015). Despite the differences in the assessment of liberal values, the perception of socio-economic rights as basic was the same, and the expansion of individual freedom was associated mainly with the socio-economic sphere, not the political and legal one. This feature of Kazakh society has been repeatedly noted by researchers (Kopbay, 2022 Alimzhanova et al., 2015). The mass consciousness in Kazakhstan, as well as in most post-Soviet societies, perceived constitutional human rights and freedoms through the paradigms of paternalism, preferred group justice to the principles of individual freedom, and recognized the leading role of the state in regulating social life.

Researchers also explain the lack of demand for civil and political rights and freedoms by the low level of public trust in the authorities and the lack of confidence in their real protection. The ambivalent perception of human rights in society and the disregard of these rights by state authorities, together with economic instability and a low level of legal and political culture, had a significant impact in the 1990s on the understanding of the concept of human rights and its implementation. The real danger is that the ideas of social justice, which are perceived as the highest value, may turn into an ideology that denies freedom. A significant part of the population is ready to accept possible restrictions on rights and freedoms in exchange for an improvement in living standards and the “restoration of order.”

The world experience shows that it is unacceptable to absolutize the freedom and interests of an individual and to absolutize the interests of society (Yushkevych, 2019; Asatryan, G., & Kalpakian, 2021). The mass political consciousness should combine individual and public interests to find an optimal balance and create favourable conditions for social practice. While in the West, civil and political rights were emphasised, and social rights were gradually added depending on economic, legal, and other developments, for Kazakh society (and for many other post-Soviet societies), the priority was the realisation of socio-economic rights, although the need for political rights and freedoms was also actualised (Bolinska & Martin, 2021). In the future, as people's well-being grows, the institutionalisation of civil and political rights and freedoms will be observed. Thus, it will be most productive to simultaneously develop civil and political, and socio-economic human rights. This will make it possible to demonstrate the dependence of socio-economic transformations on the socio-political factor that can change the social situation in Kazakhstan.

## **Conclusions and Implications**

Therefore, the modern Kazakh society needs to address socio-political issues that will significantly improve the mechanisms of its functioning. Based on the theoretical and methodological review, it was determined that the important problems for Kazakhstan and the existing political and legal model here are:

1. The development of traditionalism with its negative phenomena (revival of “privileges” for individual families), nepotism, corruption mechanisms and lack of the rule of law, economic challenges for the functioning of public institutions, negative manifestations of digitalisation that in the wrong hands can lead to total surveillance of individuals.

2. To overcome these negative phenomena, it is proposed to meet the need for the formation and development of the social policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan. It consists in reforming and modernising the society, is explained not only by socioeconomic and spiritual factors but also by political ones. The establishment of moral and political maturity, consciousness, and scientific outlook can only be achieved through an uncompromising analysis of modern philosophical trends that contribute to the progress towards a civilized, democratic, and legal society. On the other hand, the modern social policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan should actively contribute to the implementation of the main tasks of reforming and modernising society, the formation of legal consciousness and legal education of citizens of Kazakhstan based on the development of civil society concepts.

3. Given the peculiarities of the development of post-Soviet society in Kazakhstan, the most productive will be the simultaneous development of socio-political and socio-economic human rights. This will make it possible to demonstrate the dependence of socio-economic transformations on the socio-political factor that can change the social situation in Kazakhstan. Thus, society will realise the need not only for cosmetic changes but also for fundamental democratic transformations.

A promising area for further research is the study of the possibilities of legislative mechanisms for transforming Kazakh society. On this basis, it is possible to involve the postulates of transhumanism in legal practice.

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