



Globalization and cultural attitudes of youth in Kazakhstan

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Abstract

This article deals with cultural attitudes of the youth in Kazakhstan, and analyzes their probable impact on the future of Kazakhstani society. Globalization leads to qualitative changes in contemporary Kazakhstan society which includes transformation of the youth identity that is defined by internal differentiation and inconsistency of the younger generation. This article focuses on two important features of Kazakhstani cultural-national identity building: language and diaspora policies. Language plays the major role in the national identity of Kazakh youth people as sign of the nation building. Policy towards a diaspora (oralmans) does not often attract the attention of scholars in the sphere of international relations. However, this issue plays the crucial role in its national identity building. The authors have used sociological approach which is able to synthesize information on the theoretical and empirical levels and made data collection according to the sociological questionnaire and content analysis. Along with the quantitative methods the authors applied qualitative method as an observation.

Keywords: globalization, identity, language policy, diaspora.

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1. Introduction

Globalization is the most talk-about issues in the twenty first century that affects almost every human being. A key issue of debate among scholars on globalization is a destiny of ethnic identity that forms the core of national/cultural identity for most people around the world.

Many scholars believe that under influence of globalization the concept of ethnic identity is eroding and that ethnonational states are unraveling. Because the growing universal importance of science and technology, and extensive distribution of information and ideas demand less identification with a specific ethnic group and less attachment to homeland. But according to primordialists, globalization can also awaken people to their own local/national culture. Ethnic identity satisfies the people's need for cultural fulfillment, rootedness, security, and fraternity. Global culture simply cannot offer "the qualities of collective faith, dignity, and hope that only a "religious surrogate, with its promise of a territorial culture and community across the generations, can provide" (Smith, 1995). In Kazakhstan, process of nation-building through promoting rehabilitation of Kazakh language, culture, history, traditions and demography leads to the strengthening national consciousness among titular ethnicity – Kazakhs. Thus, adopting the primordial approach to our research was much more appropriate to us.

In this article, there is an attempt to clarify Kazakhstan youth cultural attitudes towards globalization, to what extent youth have been affected by globalization and what is the extent of the relation between globalization and youth attitudes towards native language, traditions and Kazakh diasporas in abroad.

2. Methodology

The outcomes of this article are based on a social survey methodology. The authors used questionnaire to collect data. The authors have subjected 100 male/female students, MA and PhD students from Al-Farabi Kazakh National University to this study. The survey was conducted during the January-April 2013.

3. Cultural Identity in Kazakhstan and impact of globalization

With the collapse of the Soviet Union Kazakhstan became vulnerable to external influences. Once the Soviet ideological framework was gone, Kazakhstan did not have a new ideology to fill the gap. In this sense, Kazakhstan governors promoted 'Kazakhisation' process by taking measures to increase the ethnic Kazakh population, rewriting Kazakh history and promotion Kazakh language. 'Kazakhisation' process furthers Kazakhs as the dominant social group without denying other ethnicities rights. Because government also advanced the idea that all people living in Kazakhstan, regardless of ethnic or national background, are Kazakhstani. This policy reflected the pluralist perspective, respecting all national groups.

The status of the Kazakh language was first upgraded already in 1989 when Kazakh was officially proclaimed as the State language, and Russian defined as the language of inter-ethnic communication. Various programmes aimed at promoting the role of the Kazakh language were put in place. This was mostly reflected in educational and cultural policies, as well as in the practices of official written communications (Karin & Chebotarev, 2002).

Nowadays Kazakhstan government are promoting Trinity of Languages, with an ultimate view to making the country trilingual in the state language of Kazakh, in Russian, the language of inter-ethnic communication, and in English as the language of successful integration into the global economy. All these changes in the official discourse illustrates Kazakhstan adaptation to global cultural trends. This was articulated by President Nazarbayev in his landmark address to the nation, "Kazakhstan – 2030," in which he clearly indicated an awareness of the enormous pressures of globalization. Consistently, however, globalization was portrayed as an imperative to which the country was forced to adapt (Strategy "Kazakhstan 2030").

Another important element of the “kazakhisation” was reflected in the Kazakhstan’s policy towards its diaspora. These returnees are known as oralmans. Kazakhstan has been conducting an active policy towards its diaspora, taking German and Israeli experience as an example. Contrary to many other empirical cases, instead of using its diaspora to promote its foreign policy interests abroad, the Kazakhstani authorities have attempted to use the diaspora to solve country’s demographic and nation-building problems. The Kazakh diaspora was brought to the forefront as an indispensable human resource. In 1992, the Kazakhstani government held a worldwide “Qazaq qurultay” inviting representatives of the Kazakh diaspora from all over the world to Almaty. Since independence, Kazakhstan has become home to more than 1.1 million immigrants, of which over 464,000 are ethnic Kazakhs or “oralmans”. Oralman also influenced on the dynamics of ethnodemographic development in the country where Kazakhs are dominant ethnical group (Status of oralman in Kazakhstan, 2006).

Such government policy effected young generation perception of Kazakhstani society and culture. At the same time young people’s lives in Kazakhstan are constantly being influenced by new cultural, technological or social trends. With the advent of the Internet and communication development, it became easier for information and different cultures from outside Kazakhstan to penetrate the country. U.S. government educational exchange programs and the Kazakh government’s overseas scholarship program, Bolashak, exposed Kazakhs to different cultural environments. The flow of tourists, the illegal import of movies and music from different countries (mainly from the United States), and the rise of the Internet all contributed to the cultural attitudes of young people.

4. Kazakhstan young people’s cultural attitude in the era of globalization

Survey results revealed a generally positive attitude to globalization among young people, who see globalization as more positive than negative (42.0%). But 35.8% of respondents perceive globalisation as a threat to their cultural identities, and 15% of respondents think that globalization have created a cosmopolitan identity (Table 1).

Table 1. How do you asses the impact of globalisation? (%)

Answers	young people under age 29
Loss of national identity and culture, implantation of Western values	35,8
Progress in the field of science and technology, extending of cultural ties	42,0
eradicates national isolation, leads to a world without borders	15,0
Difficult to answer	7,2

The integration of global cultural influences into local identities in Kazakhstan can be seen particularly through consumer culture. The majority of respondents identify themselves as modern people who follow the latest global trends (70%) and a significant number of respondents frequently stay current with new trends by observing them but don’t follow them (35.5%) and only 12% of respondents consider themselves poorly informed on issues concerning new trends in the field of fashion, technology and entertainment. (Table2)

Table 2. Do you try to follow the latest trends in fields of fashion, technology and entertainment?

Answers	young people under age 29
Yes, I follow all the trends in fashion, technology, music and entertainment	70,0
Yes, I observe all the trends hat are going around but do’t follow them	35,5
No, I’m not interested	10,0
Difficult to answer	7,2

For young people in Kazakhstan to make sense of their identity and develop a sense of belonging is very crucial. The results of the survey demonstrated that for majority respondents

who are about 53%, language which they used to speak, think, write is a dominant criteria of ethnic identity. This factor is even prevails over ethnicity heritage of their paternal side. 42% of young people determine their identity by father's nationality, 35% by religious affiliation and about 25% by national traditions and customs - (Table 3).

Table 3. What determines the nationality? (%)

Answers	young people under age 29	Kazakhs	Russians	Other ethnicities
Language	52,9	54,9	49,9	50,5
Father's ethnicity	42,0	41,6	38,3	53,7
Religion	35,0	38,4	29,4	31,1
Following the customs and traditions	24,8	24,6	26,9	19,7
Face features	17,1	13,8	24,3	15,2
Personal choice	13,9	9,6	20,3	20,0
Citizenship	12,6	13,1	11,8	12,7
Mother's ethnicity	12,5	8,6	18,6	17,1
Country of birth	10,0	11,1	7,0	12,1
Difficult to answer	3,6	4,7	1,9	1,6

On the national scale such features as language value (about 55%), religion (38.4%), citizenship (13.1%) and the country of origin (10%) are most important common indicators for Kazakhs.

The majority of young people (about 85% of the respondents) expressed that they know the national traditions and customs. Those who are familiar with the traditions - 44%, those who are less know their customs are about 41%. Every ten knows traditions worse than those who are really know them. 4.1% of respondents don't know national traditions and 1.8% found difficult to answer (Table 4).

Table 4. Do you know your national traditions and customs? (%)

Answers	young people under age 29	Kazakhs	Russians	Other ethnicities
Yes	44,1	51,6	33,0	33,3
Yes than no	40,6	36,3	47,1	46,3
No than yes	9,4	6,0	14,8	13,7
No	4,1	3,7	4,4	5,4
Difficult to answer	1,8	2,4	0,7	1,3

Kazakhs significantly more aware of their traditions than other ethnic groups. The level of awareness of national traditions among Kazakhs under age 29 reaches 88%, in which about two-thirds (52%) are keenly aware of national culture. Completely or mostly do not know the national culture every tenth Kazakh young age. However, about 4% of Kazakhs until the age of 29 were critical of their knowledge of national culture by stressing their lack of knowledge.

On the assumption of this, kazakhs belong to the group that is increasing its cultural resources, and other ethnicities are losing it with different speed. If knowledge of traditions and customs among population is quite high, in terms of their practical implementation situation is less optimistic. Only a quarter of respondents really follow customs and traditions. The others are carrying out certain elements of the national culture or because of the necessity, when there are conditions or can be limited by the most important and widespread ones. 42.5% of respondents follow that traditions and customs that they know and are able to implement

without any difficulties. More than one fifth of respondents are tend to limit only by the most important traditions. Finally, at least one in every ten respondents admitted that they do not comply traditions and customs (Table 5).

Table 5. Do you follow your own traditions and customs? (%)

Answers	young people under age 29	Kazakhs	Russians	Other ethnicities
I follow all	24,1	28,8	17,0	18,1
Those which permitted by conditions	42,5	42,8	38,6	50,8
only some	21,6	18,4	27,3	23,5
Don't follow	9,7	6,7	17,1	6,0
It's difficult to answer	2,1	3,3	-	1,6

Kazakh young people can be distinguished as ethnic group that treat national traditions and customs with the greatest respect and energy. Almost 29% of Kazakhs under age of 29 follow all traditions and customs. As for Russians this figure is 17%, other ethnicities - 18.1%.

Thus, language skills are essential for the Kazakh public's awareness. Dominant language of society is most important criteria of national identity. Language is considered as a form of, and shaper of, identity in Kazakhstan than the traditional factors of inheritance of ethnicity on the paternal side. And this factor is the most valuable for Kazakh youth.

5. Conclusion

The present article examined young Kazakhstani citizens's cultural attitudes studying in universities. University students are usually the future leaders, both within governmental agencies as well as business. In the open-ended question format, most respondents seemed to support a type of civic nationalism, which could be said to be consistent with the pluralist perspective. However, in the quantitative format, responses supported the social dominance perspective.

Kazakh youth presents their cultural and historical mission in promoting, developing and strengthening traditional culture and national identity that are being multidimensional and refer to political, social, religious, philosophical, aesthetic and other dimensions and are unfortunately losing its distinctive character and uniqueness under the influence of globalization. In this context, for majority kazakh young people preservation of language is a major symbol that reveals the identity of an ethnic. It is not just used as a form of communication at the intra-ethnic level, but it is also inclined towards portraying an ethnic's internal values. Hence, the perseverance to defend their language is natural, to ensure the continuity of their traditions.

The young generation of Kazakhstan is more open to globalization processes with less concern about the loss of cultural-national identity. At the same time ethnic kazakhs gives specific emphasis to the native language. The Kazakhstani government has pushed various pro-Kazakh reforms, like those promoting the Kazakh language. Today, many elements of traditional Kazakh culture – including food, clothing, and clan identity – remain prominent in both daily and ceremonial life. Kazakhstan is conducting an active policy towards its diaspora that influences on youth “Kazakhisation”.

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