

The empire`s remains: ethnopolitical identification of the middle-aged Russian-speaking population of North-East Kazakhstan.

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The Russian minority in Kazakhstan does not often fall into the focus of social science research. Often, since the collapse of the USSR, the Russian population has come into the focus of researchers in connection with some other phenomenon like migration, post-Soviet reforms, the politics of memory. More often, the Russian minority is viewed in context, thus, forming three problems: the role of the Russian minority in the international relations, the process of identification and migration.

The first problem is related to the status of the Russian population in Kazakhstan and its role in the world arena from the point of view of geopolitics and the theory of international relations. After the collapse of the USSR, each country has formed its own approaches to interaction with the Russian minority. Considering the fact that the definition of "Russian diaspora" differs from state to state, and politicians completely deny the existence of such a category in Kazakhstan¹, scientists propose to use in the researches patterns of behavior and everyday practices.

R. Brubaker in his 1996 article "Nationhood and the National Question in the Soviet Union and Post-Soviet Eurasia: An Institutionalist Account" notes the duality of the position of Russians in Kazakhstan, who, on the one hand, cannot be considered the titular nation, and on the other,

¹ Tokaev: Vyrazhenie "russkaya diaspora" protivorechit istinnomu polozheniyu veshchej, russkie – chast' nashego naroda. [Elektronnyj resurs]. 2020. Data obnovleniya: 03.06.2020. URL: <https://informburo.kz/novosti/tokaev-vyrazhenie-russkaya-diaspora-protivorechit-istinnomu-polozheniyu-veshchey-russkie-chast-nashego-naroda-107166.html> (data obrashcheniya: 01.07.2020).

cannot may also be a national minority². Nevertheless, many researchers use the term "Russian minority" for description, like S. Peyrouse, M. Laruelle and others³. This choice was dictated by the lack of accurate knowledge about the legal status of Russians in Kazakhstan, as well as the postulated ideas of civil nationalism by the authorities, that did not want to divide the population of Kazakhstan along ethnic lines.

N. Melvin in 1998 described the difficulty of identifying the Russian population, since this category was determined not by blood or ethnicity, but rather by membership in a cultural or socio-economic group, leading a project to modernize the "undeveloped periphery" - Central Asia⁴. Barrington, Herron and Silver emphasize quite accurately that the absence of precise boundaries between the "Russian" and "Belarusian or Ukrainian" worlds does not allow to create the "Russianness" in these countries, while the contrast in Central Asian countries heightens the sense of belonging to a national minority. The authors emphasize the feeling, and not the actual belonging: "In Kazakhstan, they feel themselves Russian"⁵.

Only in 2019, M. Blackburn, in his article "Discourses of Russian-speaking youth in Nazarbayev's Kazakhstan: Soviet legacies and responses to nation-building," suggested using the categories "Russian-speaking minority" and "Russian-speaking community", justifying this choice by the unity of historical experience, cultural and linguistic homogeneity and socialization, which took place during the period of the USSR⁶. Nevertheless, no matter what categories of analysis are used by scientists, Russia does not perceive this minority as an instrument of political pressure in Central Asia, and the mobilization potential of the "compatriots" program is rather low, since this category includes not only ethnic Russians, but all citizens born in the USSR, reducing the political potential of the Russian minority in the countries of Central Asia and Kazakhstan⁷. Researchers believed that peace between Kazakhs and Russians would be possible only with numerical parity⁸, noted the possibility of separatism by the Cossacks or an invasion⁹. The dynamics of interethnic relations is very carefully monitored by Z. Shaukenova, who, based on a

² Brubaker, R. Nationhood and the National Question in the Soviet Union and Post-Soviet Eurasia: An Institutional Account // *Theory and Society*. 1994. Vol. 23 (1). P. 47–78.

³ Peyrouse, S. Nationhood and the minority question in Central Asia. *The Russians in Kazakhstan // Europe-Asia Studies*. 2007. Vol. 59(3). P. 482.

⁴ Melvin, N. *The Russians: Diaspora and the End of Empire // Nations Abroad. Diaspora Politics and International Relations in the Former Soviet Union*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1998, P. 27–58.

⁵ Barrington L., Herron E., Silver B. *The Motherland Is Calling: Views of Homeland among Russians in the near Abroad // World Politics*. 2003. Vol. 55(2). P. 299.

⁶ Blackburn, M. *Discourses of Russian-speaking youth in Nazarbayev's Kazakhstan: Soviet legacies and responses to nation-building // Central Asian Survey*. 2019. Vol. 38(2). P. 218.

⁷ Laruelle, M. *Why No Kazakh Novorossiya? Kazakhstan's Russian Minority in a Post-Crimea World // Problems of Post-Communism*. 2018. Vol. 65. P. 4.

⁸ Khazanov, A. *The ethnic problems of contemporary Kazakhstan // Central Asian Survey*. 1995. Vol. 2. P. 253.

⁹ Laruelle, M. *Why No Kazakh Novorossiya? Kazakhstan's Russian Minority in a Post-Crimea World // Problems of Post-Communism*. 2018. Vol. 65. P. 4.

survey conducted in Kazakhstan in 2002 and 2013 (N = 1500), referring to statistical data, writes about the normalization and improvement of interethnic harmony, a decrease in the perception of problems within the framework of ethnicity (especially in the public sector). The data also suggests that the idea of another ethnic group being responsible for the troubles of the people or the state does not find support among the local population¹⁰. Such a postulation, without taking into account the very interests of the Russian population, gives rise to a one-sided approach, and also does not explain what contributes to the identification of oneself in Kazakhstan.

Another problem is the very identification of Russians. The Russian minority, finding themselves far from Russia, has a very peculiar attitude to their "homeland" and identifies themselves in different ways within the framework of another state. In more detail this process was described even before the collapse of the USSR (in the 1970s) by Pavlovich in the collective monograph "Ethnic Russia in the USSR. The Dilemma of Dominance". Pavlovich divided Russians into two groups: center and periphery¹¹. The core is responsible for the preservation of the cultural code and identity, representing itself as a "model", while the periphery (in which Pavlovich includes Russians in other states) has to adapt to the dominant traditions, social structure and norms, thereby moving away from the core¹². In a study by Barrington et al., 59.3% of Russian respondents (N = 619) saw themselves as a national minority in Kazakhstan, and 32.3% believed the opposite¹³.

Basing on the idea of the "peripherality" of Russians, Kolsto's article "The new Russian diaspora - an identity of its own? Possible identity trajectories for Russians in the former Soviet republic" provides an example of research results obtained by Brusina during an expedition to Uzbekistan (1985-1983), which shows that Russians in Central Asia separate themselves from Russians in Russia¹⁴. A study by Kosmarskaya and Savin in Pavlodar region in 2018 confirms this theory: they believe that not only the Russian minority separates itself from the Russians in Russia, Russia itself is multifaceted and its image is formed depending on the experience and information received in communications. The authors in the article "What do Kazakhstanis think about relations with their 'northern neighbor'?" identify 4 images of Russia with corresponding arguments: Russia as a refuge / protection / threat / threat and protection. It is noteworthy that the image of Russia for each respondent was based on their own experience, and opinions were

¹⁰ SHaukenova Z.K. Social'noe vzaimodejstvie etnosov: monitoring mezhetnicheskikh otnoshenij v Respublike Kazahstan. Almaty: QR BFM FK FSDI, 2013. – 129 s.

¹¹ Kolsto, P. The new Russian diaspora - an identity of its own? Possible identity trajectories for Russians in the former Soviet republic // Ethnic and Racial Studies. 1996. Vol. 19(3). P. 611.

¹²Ibid.

¹³ Barrington L., Herron E., Silver B. The Motherland Is Calling: Views of Homeland among Russians in the near Abroad // World Politics. 2003. Vol. 55(2). P. 296.

¹⁴ Kolsto, P. The new Russian diaspora - an identity of its own? Possible identity trajectories for Russians in the former Soviet republic // Ethnic and Racial Studies. 1996. Vol. 19(3). P. 631.

diametrically opposed, which suggests that Russia itself can hardly serve as the basis for the consolidation of the minority, although Russians are more loyal to it¹⁵. Nevertheless, Kosmarskaya and Savin believe that the feeling of community with Russia is created due to the memory of the USSR, a kind of "common space" that shared borders, but this did not change in its essence.

The issue of integration of the Russian population has become a key issue in existing studies, where questions about contributing and hindering factors have been raised. The above problems can be considered as obstacles, but not key, since proficiency in the Kazakh language does not guarantee the receipt of any benefits even for Kazakhs, just like the attitude towards the USSR¹⁶. In addition, among those who left Kazakhstan there is a decent share of the Kazakh population, thereby not making migration a purely "Russian" affair. Thus, the Russian population forms its own criteria for the construction of identity, which cannot be traced "from the outside". Mainstream study leaves the influence of the local population on the Russian community, its involvement in the "other" culture. Boris Kori believes that the Russian community is a unique phenomenon that is stable even far from Russia: "Despite the fact that Russians are a minority and quite distant from Russia, ethnically Russian migrants retain their language and ethnic identity. The ethnic identity of the Russian population does not disappear in proportion to the distance from Russia"¹⁷ while Pavlovich stated the opposite.

Such an understanding of the "common space", however, does not give rise to irredentism, to which enough works have been devoted. Moreover, in matters of the territorial integrity of Kazakhstan (and in particular the belonging of the Northern Territories), according to Diener in the article "Assessing potential Russian irredentism and separatism in Kazakhstan's northern oblasts", published a year after the events of the Crimean Spring, Russians perceive the northern lands as Kazakh¹⁸. Despite this, there is no single strategy for identifying the Russian minority in Kazakhstan; this process is complex and contextual. Sharipova in her article "Perceptions of National Identity in Kazakhstan: Pride, Language, and Religion" demonstrates the results of a survey conducted in 2016 (N = 1600), and states that respondents firstly identified themselves by the place of residence (City-region), and only after that they identified themselves by ethnicity or citizenship, giving rise to the assumption that the geographic principle of identification with each other is more important for the citizens of Kazakhstan than the ethnic¹⁹. In addition, as Diener

¹⁵ Kosmarskaya N.P., Savin I.S. CHto dumayut kazahstancy ob otnosheniyah s "severnym sosedom"? // Central'naya Evraziya. 2018. №1. S. 175-195.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Kolsto, P. The new Russian diaspora - an identity of its own? Possible identity trajectories for Russians in the former Soviet republic // Ethnic and Racial Studies. 1996. Vol. 19(3). P. 610.

¹⁸ Diener, A. Assessing potential Russian irredentism and separatism in Kazakhstan's northern oblasts // Eurasian Geography and Economics. 2015. Vol. 56(5). P. 1-24.

¹⁹ Sharipova, D. Perceptions of National Identity in Kazakhstan: Pride, Language, and Religion // The Muslim World. 2019. Vol. 110(1). P. 89-106.

notes, Russians form different perceptions of "homeland", which differs from person to person: a "small homeland" can be both a region and a city where a person was born, and Kazakhstan and Russia can become a "big homeland". A survey conducted by Barrington et al. showed that about half (52.5%) of respondents (N = 619) consider Kazakhstan to be their homeland in 1998, and only 18 percent consider Russia²⁰.

The third problem is related to the high level of migration among the Russian population. Two years before the collapse of the USSR, according to the census, Russians accounted for 37.4% (about 6 million) of the population of the Kazakh SSR²¹. The east of the country was predominantly "Russian" (51.7% of the total population Russians versus 38.9% of Kazakhs), the center (46.9% versus 25.8%), the north (45.7% versus 24.6%), as well as Astana (54.1% versus 17.7%) and Almaty (57.4% versus 23.4%). S. Peyrouse in the article "Nationhood and the minority question in Central Asia. The Russians in Kazakhstan" indicates that the northern regions were predominantly "Russian" (The names of the regions are given in accordance with the administrative division of that time: Akmola, Karaganda, Kokchetav, Kustanai, East Kazakhstan, North Kazakhstan and Pavlodar regions)²². However, migration began long before the collapse of the USSR: according to Sadovskaya, the starting point is 1987, when emigration became possible²³. She distinguishes 4 periods of emigration, the first fell on the period before the collapse of the USSR (1987-1991), it was mainly the German population, and in total during this time about 160 thousand people left the Kazakh SSR. The second period concerns the period between 1992 and 1998, when people were forced to move between the CIS countries in the context of the transition to a market economy (1994 is the peak year when 481 thousand people left the country). 1999-2003 Sadovskaya characterizes as a period when there was a decline in migration and emigration due to the stabilization of the economies of the post-Soviet states. The fourth period from 2004 to 2008 can be characterized by the emergence of a positive balance of migration, growth of repatriates and foreign labor power.

The 1999 census data allow us to find out who left the country and how the ethnic composition of the already independent Kazakhstan changed: at the time of the census, the share of the Russian population decreased by 7% and amounted to 30%, while the share of the Kazakh

²⁰ Barrington L., Herron E., Silver B. The Motherland Is Calling: Views of Homeland among Russians in the near Abroad // World Politics. 2003. Vol. 55(2). P. 296.

²¹ Alekseenko A. O nekotoryh itogah perepisi naseleniya Kazahstana [Elektronnyj resurs] // Demoskop Weekly: elektronnyaya versiya byulletenya Naselenie o obshchestvo, 2001. URL: <http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/2002/057/analit04.php> (data obrashcheniya: 01.07.2020).

²² Peyrouse, S. Nationhood and the minority question in Central Asia. The Russians in Kazakhstan // Europe-Asia Studies. 2007. Vol. 59(3). P. 482.

²³ Sadovskaya, E. Kazahstan v Central'noaziatskoj migracionnoj subsisteme [Elektronnyj resurs] // Demoskop Weekly: elektronnyaya versiya byulletenya Naselenie o obshchestvo, 2009. URL: <http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/2010/0415/analit04.php> (data obrashcheniya: 01.07.2020).

increased from 40.1% to 53.4%. Thus, out of 6 million Russians, 1.5 million left Kazakhstan. In the east, the ethnic composition changed in favor of Kazakhs (now the dominant group were Kazakhs, accounting for 48.5%, and Russians - 45.4%), in the center the gap narrowed (37.6% of Kazakhs and 43.6% of Russians in 1999, while in 1989 there were 25.8% of Kazakhs and 46.9% of Russians), in the north the share of the Kazakh population increased by 10% (amounting to 34.1%), in Almaty there was a significant increase among the Kazakh population and a decline in Russian (38,5% of Kazakhs and 45.2% of Russians, respectively), and in Astana the ethnic composition became equal (41.8% of the Kazakh population and 40.5% of the Russian).

In 2009, the share of the Russian population was already 23.7%, and the Kazakh - 63.1%, which indicates a slight decrease in the share of the Russian population in comparison with the migration of the post-Soviet period²⁴, and in 2017 the share of the Russian population was 20.2%²⁵.

Sushchij's article "The Russians of Kazakhstan - the geodemographic dynamics of the post-Soviet period" reveals the features of emigration and changes in the ethnic balance in the regions: the communities of southern and western Kazakhstan were the first to "melt", since the number of Russians was small even in the Soviet years (in the west, by 1989, there were 26.5% of Russians, 21.8% in the south²⁶), and in the northern and eastern regions emigration was hampered by historical rootedness and a greater concentration of Russians²⁷.

The decrease in the outflow of Russians already in the 2000s is explained by the fact that some of the Russians who were unequivocally inclined to leave had already left Kazakhstan, while the other had adapted to the changed sociopolitical reality. However, Russian emigration slowed down, but did not stop. In 2018, 41.9 thousand people left Kazakhstan, of which 97.5% moved to Russia²⁸, and from January to December 2019, 32.9 thousand Russians left Kazakhstan²⁹. Such figures are incomparable with those that were in the 90s, but the tendency to leave Kazakhstan among the Russian population has continued.

²⁴ Diener, A. Assessing potential Russian irredentism and separatism in Kazakhstan's northern oblasts // *Eurasian Geography and Economics*. 2015. Vol. 56(5). P. 1-24.

²⁵ Sushchij S.YA. Russkie Kazahstana: geodemograficheskaya dinamika postsovetskogo perioda i perspektivy pervoj poloviny XXI v. // *Sociologicheskie issledovaniya*. 2018. N 8. S. 23.

²⁶ Alekseenko A. O nekotoryh itogah perepisi naseleniya Kazahstana [Elektronnyj resurs] // *Demoskop Weekly: elektronnyaya versiya byulletenya Naselenie o obshchestvo*, 2001. URL: <http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/2002/057/analit04.php> (data obrashcheniya: 01.07.2020).

²⁷ Sushchij S.YA. Russkie Kazahstana: geodemograficheskaya dinamika postsovetskogo perioda i perspektivy pervoj poloviny XXI v. // *Sociologicheskie issledovaniya*. 2018. N 8. S. 24.

²⁸ Pochti vse emigranty iz Kazahstana vybirayut Rossiyu. [Elektronnyj resurs]. 2019. Data obnovleniya: 05.03.2019. URL: <https://easily.com/ru/news/2019/03/05/pochti-vse-emigranty-iz-kazahstana-vybirayut-rossiyu> (data obrashcheniya: 01.07.2020).

²⁹ Iz Kazahstana v Rossiyu: pochemu stranu prodolzhaet pokidat' ekonomicheski aktivnoe naselenie?. [Elektronnyj resurs]. 2020. Data obnovleniya: 02.06.2020. URL: <https://rus.azattyq.org/a/from-kazahstana-to-russia-why-economically-active-people-continue-leaving-kazahstana/30647144.html> (data obrashcheniya: 01.07.2020).

The main reasons for emigration and its consequences are still being discussed by scientists. Khazanov, in his article "The ethnic problems of contemporary Kazakhstan", published in 1995, said that the Soviet government itself is responsible for the decline in the share of the Russian population in Kazakhstan, which put only ethnic Russians in prestigious posts (from education to engineering) , while the Kazakh youth remained unemployed³⁰. Moreover, the collapse of the Soviet Union entailed a sharp transition of the population "from village to city", and thereby increased the share of the Kazakh population due to the declining Russian.

Sadovskaya, in her study "Kazakhstan in the Central Asian Migration Subsystem", believes that the main reasons for emigration were the economic crisis, as well as the nation-building policy, often discriminatory for ethnic minorities (which manifested itself in limited access to benefits, as well as a lack of social and career opportunities). This is confirmed by Jardykhhan, providing the ratio of Kazakh to non-Kazakh population in the government (6: 1) and the Ministry of Economy (7: 1), while in more "Russian" regions in the local administration the ratio (4: 1)³¹. Alekseenko, on the other hand, believes that the change in the ethnic composition and the policy of nation-building served only as a catalyst for emigration, which would have manifested itself without that as the economic situation in Kazakhstan deteriorated.³²

The state and officials are aware of the problem of emigration of the population, and already in 1994, President Nazarbayev considered the outflow of the population inevitable: "Everyone should understand that migration is inevitable in such shocks as the collapse of an empire or the collapse of the state. Many people have lost their bearings, strive to find support in their homeland. But for thousands and thousands of people this homeland has already become Kazakhstan, and they are not going to leave it. Let me give you the following figures: more than 200 thousand Russians left the republic last year. Of course, their departure is a great loss, and personally it hurts me"³³. Daniyar Ashimbaev, a well-known Kazakh political scientist, member of the National Council of Public Trust (NCPT), believes that the authorities of the first state are to blame for the outflow of youth from Kazakhstan to Russia: career prospects. And these same reasons, as a rule, lead to the fact that those who left to study in another country, remain there after

³⁰ Khazanov, A. The ethnic problems of contemporary Kazakhstan // Central Asian Survey. 1995. Vol. 2. P. 249.

³¹ Zardykhhan, Z. Russians in Kazakhstan and Demographic Change: Imperial Legacy and the Kazakh Way of Nation Building // Asian Ethnicity. 2004. Vol. 5(1). P. 73.

³² Alekseenko, A. Naselenie Kazahstana mezhdru proshlym i budushchim [Elektronnyj resurs] // Polit.ru - informacionno-analiticheskij portal, 2006. URL: <https://polit.ru/article/2006/05/16/demoscope245/> (data obrashcheniya: 01.07.2020).

³³ Olzhas, A. CHto dumal Nazarbaev ob ottoke naseleniya iz Kazahstana v 90-h [Elektronnyj resurs] // Nur.kz - politika, 2019. URL: <https://politics.nur.kz/1829636-nazarbaev-ob-emigracii-russkih-v-90-h-u-mena-eto-vyzyvaet-bol.html> (data obrashcheniya: 01.07.2020).

graduation. And this is not the fault of Russia, but ours "³⁴. The Minister of Labor of Kazakhstan, Birzhan Nurymbetov, also spoke about the problem of migration: "Not only the Ministry of Labor is concerned about this, the entire government, the entire state. The best minds should remain in Kazakhstan. Therefore, today the education system is being radically revised. Basically, 96 percent leave Kazakhstan for the CIS countries. Of these, 80.9 percent - to Russia. The main reasons for leaving are the return to their historical homeland, the issues of obtaining education and further employment in search of a better life "³⁵. Detailed discussions on the topic of emigration and its causes have become an integral part of the academic and political community: round tables, meetings of the authorities are devoted to it. The Russian population plays a key role here, since it forms the core of emigration, at the same time, it forms its own understanding of the conditions pushing for emigration, and also determines the events that serve as a starting point for leaving the country (after all, despite the significant flow of emigrants in the 90s, Russians still leave Kazakhstan, thereby shaping the vision of the reasons in different ways and building their own argumentation).

Studies by Kaiser and Chinn ("Russian-Kazakh Relations in Kazakhstan", 1995) show that the first reason pushing Russians to emigrate is interethnic conflicts, followed by economics with politics and language³⁶. The actions of the state in the latter sphere back in 93 were called "Kazakhization", as Khazanov wrote about³⁷, but soon the term acquired a broader meaning, implying all of the above reasons why people emigrate from Kazakhstan. An adequate definition of "Kazakhization" is given by Matushkevich already in the 21st century, in the article "The language issue in Kazakhstan - institutionalizing new ethnic relations after independence" she offers the following definition of "Kazakhization": the process of the rise of Kazakhs as a national group at the expense of other groups, mainly Russian, at the same time, perceived by the Kazakhs as a way of "payback" for the years of "Russian presence"³⁸. Thus, "Kazakhization" has become an empty concept, which includes absolutely everything that can push a person to migrate, becoming a kind of "frame" of perception. The growth of migration is also conditioned by the

³⁴ CHlen NSOD Ashimbaev: Ottok molodezhi iz Kazahstana v RF – eto ne vina Rossii, a nasha. [Elektronnyj resurs]. 2020. Data obnovleniya: 28.02.2020. URL: <https://zonakz.net/2020/02/28/chlen-nsod-ashimbaev-ottok-molodezhi-iz-kazahstana-v-rf-eto-ne-vina-rossii-a-nasha/> (data obrashcheniya: 01.07.2020).

³⁵ Dyusengulova, R. Utechku mozgov iz Kazahstana prokommentiroval ministr truda [Elektronnyj resurs] // Tengrinews, 2019. URL: https://tengrinews.kz/kazakhstan_news/utechku-mozgov-iz-kazahstana-prokommentiroval-ministr-truda-385756/ (data obrashcheniya: 01.07.2020).

³⁶ Kaiser, R., Chinn, J. Russian-Kazakh Relations in Kazakhstan // Post-Soviet Geography. 1995. Vol. 36(5). P. 261.

³⁷ Khazanov, A. The ethnic problems of contemporary Kazakhstan // Central Asian Survey. 1995. Vol. 2. P. 255.

³⁸ Matuszkiewicz, R. The language issue in Kazakhstan – institutionalizing new ethnic relations after independence // Economic and environmental studies. 2010. Vol. 10 (2). P. 211-227.

availability of Russian citizenship, which can be obtained under the compatriots resettlement program.

The interest's decline in the study of the Russian-speaking population is obviously connected, on the one hand, with the fact that the outflow of the population to Russia has weakened, on the other hand, with social stability and relative harmony in the field of interethnic relations. Moreover, new challenges appeared for Kazakhstan, first in the face of Islamism, and then in growing influence from China. Even less often, researchers turn to the older generation of the Russian-speaking population, since the "second generation" is obviously considered the most promising in terms of forecasts of the development of Kazakhstani society.

The subject of our research is the evolution and key features of the value orientations of the middle-aged Russian-speaking population of North-East Kazakhstan.

The research design is based on qualitative methods, mainly on individual biographical interviews. During the winter of 2019-2020 we interviewed 15 residents of Semey and towns nearby, born in 1972-1976. The choice of respondents was determined by the unique life experience of the Russian-speaking population's generation who received secondary education in the USSR and built a career in the conditions of an ethnic minority in the independent Kazakhstan state. We assumed that people of this particular age, due to their involvement in the socio-political processes of Kazakhstani society, should determine the appearance of the modern Russian community, accumulate value orientations and broadcast to the younger generation.

Since 2014, the post-Soviet states have received another alarming signal about the need to change the political practice of integrating ethnic minorities. Social cohesion came to the fore among the national security priorities of the state.

However, the latest research shows that the national policy of the state did not have a significant impact on the processes of ethnic self-identification of Russian minorities. In particular, the new generation of the Russian community, which is made up of young people born after 1991, do not consider themselves to be an organic part of the Kazakh state's community. In this regard using the methodological apparatus of migration research seems doubtful. In the descriptions of the Russian population as migrants of the first and second waves, one sees attempts to draw parallels with the modern problems of Western Europe, which obviously have an external character. Studying Russian population as migrants can lead to the moment, when obvious structural, demographic and cultural-historical features of the Russian community are omitted.

There are many Russians who think that they are forced to passively adopt various political practices aimed at integration, which for them means assimilation and the complete erasure of their ethnic identity. These essentially existential experiences turn out to be outside the analytical focus and are supplanted by the study of political-legal, socio-economic and cultural-historical problems.

To perform this task, it is obviously necessary to move away from interpretations of the Russian community purely as a political practice's object (policy of integration, Europeanization, assimilation, liberation movement, etc.). Considering ethnic identification as constructing discursive constraints, we would rather to reveal its subjective properties expressed in practical terms and cultural idioms, reflected in rhetorical strategies.

In this regard, we planned to solve two complex tasks: the first, on the basis of biographical analysis, we wanted to characterize the life trajectories that form the modern Russian ethnicity in the post-Soviet space (identification of key biographical points that form the value orientation in the socio-political space). Secondly, we intended to determine the features of the formation and means of describing the modern social and political reality of the Russian population (understanding of their own political status, linguistic situation, attitude towards Kazakhs, experience and perception of cases of discrimination, identification of perceived threats to cultural identity, transnational contacts and actions, emotional connection with Russia, vision and building the life trajectory of children).

In order to solve the set tasks, the criteria for choosing respondents were determined, among which:

1. Respondent must identify himself with Russian identity;
2. Respondent's age is between 40 and 48;
3. Accommodation in Semey (and rural areas), and Kazakhstan on a permanent basis.

In the process of analyzing and interpreting the data in the summer and fall of 2020, we contacted the respondents, clarifying the details and finding out the details.

In this study, 15 people from the East Kazakhstan region were interviewed who identified themselves as "Russians". We applied snowball sample with geographical features, since the Russian population of the entire region was studied: 10 people were interviewed from the former regional center - Semey (formerly Semipalatinsk), 2 people - from the current center of Ust-Kamenogorsk and 3 people from the neighboring town of Ridder. Since a qualitative survey was planned, namely, an in-depth interview, the number of respondents of 15 people is optimal - 15 interviews with respondents were recorded using a Dictaphone, and the total duration was more than 25 hours.

The survey was conducted in pre-agreed places convenient for the respondents (often it was their place of residence), taking into account the wishes of providing complete anonymity and removing facts that contribute to the disclosure of their identity. The names of respondents are

replaced with numbers, all indirect information (names mentioned in replicas, etc.) are also changed.

We paid the main attention to the concepts in which the solidarity of the Russian-speaking population of Kazakhstan is presented, with the help of what symbolic means the differentiation between "friend and foe" occurs and the situation of ethnic inequality is objectified. The study focuses on everyday practices and personal narratives and seeks to address the issue of how the Russian-speaking population constructs their identity in the Russian, Kazakh and global space at the same time.

In this regard, the main method of our research was a qualitative in-depth interview. A deep biographical interview is a well-known method of qualitative research in sociology, which allows a more precise and extensive consideration of such a process as identification and the phenomenon - identity.

We regard the process of ethnic identification as the construction of discursive restrictions expressed in practical categories and cultural idioms. Accordingly, we pay the main attention to the concepts in which the solidarity of the Russian-speaking population is presented, with the help of what symbolic means the differentiation of "friend or foe" takes place and the situation of ethnic inequality is objectified. The methodological framework of the biographical interview is determined primarily by the theoretical traditions of interpretive sociology, which include elements of sociolinguistic theory, phenomenological sociology of Alfred Schütz, sociology of the Chicago School, primarily symbolic interactionism and ethnomethodology. In the 1970s and 80s, Fritz Schütze developed a systematic method for hermeneutic textual interpretation of biographical interviews, the purpose of which is to identify the structure of personal and social processes of action and suffering, as well as the potential for overcoming and changing them³⁹.

At the center of biographical analysis is not only the reconstruction of intentionality, which is presented in the form of a person's life path, but also the embeddedness of the personality in social macrostructures. Interpretation of the interview text involves a sequential analysis, in which Schütze identifies a combination of three steps.

The first step is a formal textual analysis, as a result of which the transcribed interview should be broken down into thematic segments.

The second step is a structural description of these segments. The purpose of structural description is to explain the basic biographical structural processes: trajectories of experiences, biographical schemes of actions, and other social processes that are presented in the narrative. The

³⁹ Schütze, F. (1983). Biographieforschung und narratives Interview. *Neue Praxis*, 13(3), 283-293. <https://nbnresolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ss0ar-53147>

structural description reveals in a detailed line-by-line analysis of the interview text, explicit and hidden meaning and highlights the indicators of the process of sedimentation of the narrator's experience. It is important to stay at the text level at all times and use the narrator's own categories.

At the third stage of the analysis, based on a comparative comparison of all interviews, there is a transition to more abstract theoretical categories and models. In practice, this means that in biographical research, first of all, the innovative aspect is provided by the strategy of grounded theory.

At the same time, it is important to analytically distinguish between contemporary and synchronous experience in experiencing past events. An autobiographical raw impromptu narrative should not be seen as a reproductive repetition of past experiences. In this regard, Gabriel Rosenthal distinguishes two levels for the analysis of told biographical stories: genetic analysis and analysis of the "told life story".

The purpose of genetic analysis is to reconstruct the biographical understanding of experience at the time when life events were unfolding, and to reconstruct the chronological sequence of experiences that accompanied them. While the purpose of the analysis of the "told story" is to identify the meanings that are attributed by the narrator to biographical events now and some years later.

The main purpose of including a biographical element in scheduled interviews is to provoke a spontaneous autobiographical narrative that is not structured by the questions asked by the interviewer, but is consistent with the appropriate structures of the narrator.

From the point of view of the analysis of the content of the interview, the four structural processes identified by Schütze are of fundamental importance, which are determined: first, by the planned actions caused by the initiative of the person; second, institutional expectations; thirdly, by extraneous conditions that indicate a potential loss of control over the life situation; random, unexpected or inexplicable twists in the biography.

The advantage of in-depth interviews over quantitative research is its methodological sensitivity in describing the process and constructing argumentation for the perception of social reality, answering the questions "how, why, what for?". Moreover, thanks to the semi-structured interview, the respondents were able not only to speak on topics of concern to them, but also to form complex algorithms that were manifested throughout the interview: touching upon the themes of childhood, adolescence and youth. Since the focus of the study is the ethnopolitical identification of the Russian population, a significant part of the questions were focused on the perception of everyday life and the everyday experience of the world, which, from the point of view of Merleau-Ponty, is the basis for conducting phenomenological research and everyday life in general: "we must start with restoring the basic experience of the world, in relation to which

science is a reflection of the second order"⁴⁰. J. Spradley described the principle of in-depth interviews quite simply and in detail: "I want to understand the world from your point of view. I want to know what you know as you know it. I want to understand the meaning of your experience, get into your skin, feel the way you feel, explain the way you explain. Will you become my teacher and will you help me understand?"⁴¹.

The semi-structured interviews consisted of five thematic blocks: First, the ways of self-identification and choice of life strategy - profession, family, citizenship. The respondents were asked questions such as "How do you feel about interethnic marriages? Does your ethnicity affect the profession: career growth, responsibilities, etc.? In what cases would you change your citizenship?". Such questions are aimed at assessing interethnic relations in the eyes of the Russian population, the influence of the ethnic component on the ways of describing the world and its perception.

Secondly, the biography and inner experiences of significant events in the history of independent Kazakhstan and Russia. In such a block there were the following questions: "What did you feel during the collapse of the USSR? Do you have any nostalgia for it? How did you react to the annexation of Crimea? " - the above-mentioned questions are asked in order to study in more detail the experience of the respondents and to identify the life strategies that subsequently formed the Russian community in Kazakhstan.

Third, the understanding of the national minority and the vision of Kazakhstani statehood and national policy. For a better understanding of this phenomenon, the respondents were asked questions of various levels of depth, starting with the simplest one: "Do you know the term "national policy"? How do you assess the national policy in Kazakhstan" and ending with the direct topic of the block: "Have you ever been in situations when you felt like a national minority? How do you feel about the fact that you are not a representative of the titular nation, is this difference manifested in everyday life?" These questions were asked to understand the self-identification of the Russian population in Kazakhstan, as well as to consider everyday interactions in an ethnic or any other context.

Fourth, the degree, forms and ways of integration / disintegration. Since, according to Burkhanov⁴² and other researchers⁴³, one of the key barriers between the interaction of the Kazakh

⁴⁰ Kvale S. *Issledovatel'skoe interv'yu*. — M.: Smysl, 2003. - 60 s.

⁴¹ *Ibid*, 127.

⁴² Burkhanov, A. (2020). Multiculturalism and Nation-Building in Kazakhstan: Trends in Media Discourse, State Policy, and Popular Perceptions. *The Muslim World*, 110(1), 24-39. <https://doi.org/https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/muwo.12316>

⁴³ Blackburn, M. Discourses of Russian-speaking youth in Nazarbayev's Kazakhstan: Soviet legacies and responses to nation-building // *Central Asian Survey*. 2019. Vol. 38(2).; Kaiser, R., Chinn, J. Russian-Kazakh Relations in Kazakhstan // *Post-Soviet Geography*. 1995. Vol. 36(5).

and Russian populations is language, the attitude of the Russian population to the language and the degree of proficiency in it is decisive in the context of the forced Kazakhization of the population. However, we were interested not only in the language issue, but also in the degree of involvement in everyday interactions, which sometimes take unexpected forms. Standard questions like “Do you have Kazakh friends? Do you prefer to interact with a specific ethnic group or not?” further, depending on the respondent, they were led to unusual questions of the type: "Do you celebrate Orthodox holidays with the Kazakhs?"

Fifth, the position on key issues of the Kazakh and Russian domestic and foreign policy agenda. Such a block is not only aimed at studying the involvement of the Russian population in the political agenda of the two states, but also to reveal the preferences and identification of oneself with the state as a whole: questions about any unrest in relation to Russia or Kazakhstan served as a marker of involvement not only in the information field of states, but also building your own trajectories in general.

Mostly, the answers to the first block varied from respondent to respondent. Most of the respondents identified themselves with the Russian population. Among the respondents, phrases such as “But I am Russian anyway” or “For them we are all Russian” were often heard in the context of the ethnicity of the parents. Some respondents (three men) identified themselves with the Cossacks, but did not make a clear distinction between them and the feeling of being “Russian”. The respondents believe that in Kazakhstan they managed to realize themselves in the professional sphere, and only one respondent noted that she felt direct discrimination at work (“For six years I could not get a “ lieutenant ”, all my colleagues (Kazakhs) were already starlets or majors. I wrote a letter to the Ministry of Defense - and in 2-3 weeks they raised me, apologized "). At the same time, the respondents did not think about changing their citizenship, and were more focused on the future of their children - for them, Russian citizenship would be preferable.

Considering that the youth of the respondents fell on the collapse of the USSR and the "dashing 90s", almost all respondents noted indifference in relation to the political processes of that time, and to the collapse of the USSR. “We were young, we were in for a coup, that collapse was not up to that,” says the respondent. Based on the information received, the Russian population did not particularly follow the processes of disintegration and did not attach much importance, considering the collapse of the USSR as another reform. Nevertheless, the respondents noted the presence of nostalgia for Soviet times, and noted the great solidarity and decency of the population, the presence of order and confidence in the future: “How many factories did we have here before? They fed people. Hosiery, felt, tank, fur and leather, ship factory ... People knew that there would be money, food, and maybe an apartment. Now what? Trading houses and restaurants. Nothing else is being built". The annexation of Crimea to Russia did not evoke enthusiastic emotions among

the Russian population, rather, a sense of justice and restoration of order, and then only among those who followed Russia. Other respondents noted that the Crimea topic is interesting only to Russia and Ukraine: "I doubt that somewhere in Texas or Colorado some John is sitting, drinking beer and watching baseball and thinking about Crimea. Me too, Crimea does not play a role for me. "

The respondents demonstrated partial knowledge of the term "national policy" and often spoke about its absence in Kazakhstan. In their opinion, interethnic harmony and tolerance are not at all the merit of politicians, but of complex social ties that are formed from childhood. Nevertheless, situations of discrimination were present in the lives of the respondents, but rarely: "My son was beaten, they shouted 'hey, orys' (Russian), and they began to beat him. But this ... one in a thousand". The respondents also talked about everyday interaction with other ethnicities in Kazakhstan, indicating the absence of any reproaches or insults, and if they did exist, they more often indicated the context: "This is what collective farmers are doing, beggars, newcomers ..."

Opinions about the language among the respondents were divided into two camps: those supporting the Kazakh language and its skeptics. The first group often spoke about the obligation of Kazakhs to know the Kazakh language, and associated it with a sense of duty and love for their homeland. At the same time, the respondents from this group showed an increased interest in the Kazakh language and tried to use it in everyday life, if necessary: "I can say in broken words to understand". Moreover, men noted the importance of the Kazakh language in the professional sphere and the need to study it for their future careers. A group of skeptics, however, often appealed to experience, referring to the low level of knowledge of the Kazakh language among the Kazakhs themselves, as well as the complexity of its use in legal documents. Skeptics also noted the absence of any methodology for teaching the Kazakh language and a unified understanding of terms: "That's how I work at work. There was an order, they wrote in Kazakh - I gave it to my colleagues, and each translated it differently. Everyone. As a result, they found out in Russian what he wanted. "In general, the respondents showed no ethnic division in matters of friendship or family ties. Standing apart were Russian traditions and holidays, which are celebrated for granted "on the roll" - as the respondent noted, "without giving meaning. Easter is the same. It's not about religion. The same is true for Nauryz, there is more cuisine here, in both of them".

All respondents noted the involvement in the Russian information field and monitoring of the pro-state media: the most popular sources of information were Perviy Kanal, Russia Today, and TASS. At the same time, news from Kazakhstan is often received in the background - on the radio in the car or on Instagram. Nevertheless, the respondents argued and substantiated their choice of "homeland" in different ways, often linking this term either with the USSR or with Kazakhstan as the place where their lives passed. Russia, in the eyes of the respondents, acted

either as a “congenial country” or as a “place of ancestors” with their inherent connotations “Spiritual, big, cultural”, etc. A special role in this image is played by the children of the respondents themselves, who have more opportunities and prospects in Russia, as well as a chance to get an education.

As a conclusion, we would like to bring up three fundamental provisions for discussion:

First, the study showed that the concept of “Cossacks” became the key discourse mechanism expressing the marginal position of the Russian diaspora. The phenomenon of "Cossacks" is creatively interpreted by the respondents, allowing them to combine two identifying models: on the one hand, to treat themselves as part of the "Russian world", on the other, to emphasize their specialness and even privilege in relation to it. Below there are some parts of the interview.

I believe that I am more of a Cossack, because to say that this is a diaspora or an estate, but if an estate, then which one? Military? Doesn't fit. I consider myself ...

I am Russian in general, but more of a Don Cossack. That's what they say. Ancestors were from there, Cossacks, from the Don.

I position myself as a Cossack, not a Russian.

Russians from Kazakhstan are more “valuable” in Russia than Russian from Russia. We were in Russia, they valued our ability to work, we are hard workers ... We were all taken as hard workers ...

And the Russians in Russia, they are completely different from us. We are somehow more, apparently due to the fact that we live with Kazakhs, we are more friendly and more condescending to other nationalities, and there, Russians, they beat themselves in the chest with a fist, shout "I am Russian", for them others there are no nations, but russian

The strategy of representing oneself as part of a “true”, “primordial”, “traditional”, “real” cultural group manifested itself in the course of interviews and in the process of discussing other issues.

Secondly, as has been noted more than once, the identification of the diaspora will reinforce the ideological tendencies that the "metropolis" forms. These patterns were especially evident when discussing geopolitical issues, issues of foreign policy of Russia and personally of the figure of Vladimir Putin.

I like Putin's policy... I see that they (other people in Russia) do not like it, but it is just that we can see it from afar, some do not see it nearby. Yes, take for all Putin's activities.... (He) Increased the budget several times, look at the weapons in the nineties, deplorable, even during the split, as I was young and full of energy and strength, he then stopped the war in Chechnya. The fleet was revived, everything works. Benefits, just take

child benefits, this is state support, we don't have such benefits, but what we have is what it is. Maybe we are different in this, the Cossacks do not cry. Well, Russia's policy is stable, I just can't imagine if Putin leaves, who will take his place. There is virtually no replacement. Some say, "Putin such a..." and I say, damn it, let's consider the Crimea ... Without a single shot, (it became a part of Russia), how had he done?

I believe that during the reign of Putin (the country "rose from its knees"). He and team, he was able to raise the level of Russia, in the military sphere, social policy. I think this is all right.

Putin has now raised the bar for Russia's international competition with all other hegemonic countries, and after his sudden death or departure, Russia will simply be torn apart into small states and can turn his entire cohort, which has acquired privileges, let's say, will be buried.

Putin was able to stop the Chechen war with his strength of character. Respect for that. After he dispersed that cohort, led by Berezovsky, who seized power, was able to jail Khodorkovsky, for whom all the laws were not written, respect rose. When Berezovsky was overthrown and Khodorkovsky was imprisoned, Putin's points rose. When there were elections, we always found the opportunity to come with my husband to Russia, specifically to vote for Putin. The last time the visiting commission was already on the territory of Kazakhstan. We still found the time and even the desire to go here and vote for Putin, for us he is an authority.

Memories of the period of the collapse of the USSR, as well as descriptions of cases of ethnic discrimination, became another relevant trigger of these emotions. For example:

Although I heard from the Russians themselves in the south that even though they know the Kazakh language and work, they say "we will always remain white-eared for them," there is still oppression, maybe some. Even knowing the language, I would remain white-eared for them (a dismissive name for the Russian population).

In this regard, yes, I can give an example, take even last year, I was nominated by the school to the city competition. I prepared, I did so many things. We will not be able to achieve the same heights as the Kazakhs. I won at one of the contests, my rivals have already told me that I will win, because of all sections and points, I had an advantage. But they give the victory to a person who speaks only the Kazakh language, all the performances were in the Kazakh language, this person performed in the Kazakh national costume, the Kazakh culture, and she had more chances to go to the region and get a victory there than I had. Because of the 14 participants in the city competition, I was the only Russian. Even the beginning of the competition, that we pulled out tokens, under which

number we will perform, everything went in the Kazakh language. I had to say all this in Kazakh.

When our child was in school, there was a reading competition and he did not take first place, only because they gave the place to the (first) Kazakh boy.

Third, the interview materials show interesting information about the combination and paradoxical interweaving of pragmatic discourse and ideological attitudes. Discussions of everyday life, worries about the future of children, worries about their own assessment of their economic status come into conflict with patriotic feelings, which are described by concepts that have pronounced imperial connotations.

We are indigenous here, some, out of ignorance of history, ask if we are from the Don, I tell them that "bro, we are historically here." If we take the Siberian Cossacks - this is a historical phenomenon, this is the Siberian Land, the historical southeastern Union "Siberia" is an organization, this is the Siberian Land, but in the process of division, land surveying, this is now the territory of Kazakhstan, no one disputes. It's like the Altai Territory, this is also now the territory of Kazakhstan and the city of Altai was named there. Well, although here is the Altai region of Russia, therefore, no one here disputes. Historically, this was the Siberian line.

I do not see anything in this, I myself understand perfectly that they have the right to this pride and be proud of theirs everywhere. They have the right to do so and I do not mind and definitely I don't feel some oppression (on the promotion of Kazakh culture).

Yes, I want to learn (Kazakh language). I have no preconceptions. In my own way, so to speak, I was born here and I consider all this to be my homeland, and the language of this land.. I would like to communicate and learn it ... I eat Kazakh meat, I drink koumiss. I like everything here, the cuisine, the people, and I would love to learn the language (about learning the Kazakh language). I would like to live out my life and die here, in Kazakhstan, on this land.

This is already the Kazakh land, I do not feel anything, annoyance or resentment. This is the Kazakh land, let it be.

I would gladly take the chance and return. Not because it will be easier for me there, with some kind of Kazakh language or attitude. It's just that, oddly enough, I was born in Kazakhstan, but I consider the Russian Federation my homeland, I don't know why. But I think so. (About migration to the Russian Federation)

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