

## **Kazakh language**

Up until the 1980s, the Kazakh language was not the state or official language of Kazakhstan. This is in contrast to the situation regarding the Georgian language in Georgia, Armenian in Armenia, or Lithuanian, Latvian, or Estonian in the Baltic republics. Apparently, this state of affairs had something to do with the fact that in the prerevolutionary period, Kazakh was considered but one of many dialects of the “Tatar language”; only in the Soviet period did it acquire the status of an independent language. At the same time, Kazakh as a literary language developed rather late, only in the middle of the twentieth century. It may be for these reasons that Kazakh did not enter usage in state and scientific communications, occupying instead no more than a small niche in art, literature, and particular subjects of the humanities.

Be that as it may, Kazakh remained the native spoken language of the clear majority of Kazakhs. According to data of the All-union censuses conducted in 1959, 1970, 1979, and 1989, at least 98 percent of ethnic Kazakhs regarded Kazakh as their native language.<sup>32</sup>

Yet, during the years of Soviet rule, Kazakh failed to emerge from the bounds of its ethnic and family realm, never becoming an interethnic language of communication for other peoples of Kazakhstan. The level of mastery of the Kazakh language by the country’s non-Kazakh population was always extremely low, and it never exceeded 1.5 percent, according to the 1989 All-union Census.<sup>33</sup>

Thus, for example, according to the 1989 census, only the following percentage of non-Kazakh peoples could speak Kazakh fluently: Russians, 0.8; Germans, 0.7; Ukrainians, 0.6; Belarusians, 0.4; Poles, .0.4; and Koreans, 1.1. It is quite normal that although the degree of knowledge of Kazakh remained low, it was significantly higher among representatives of other Turkic peoples. In particular, 5.8 percent of Uzbeks could speak Kazakh fluently, 6.2 percent of Azerbaijanis, 6.6 percent of Tatars, and 10.6 percent of Uighurs.

As it did throughout the former Soviet Union, including Kazakhstan, Russian served as the state language, the language of “interethnic communication,” a sort of lingua franca. According to the 1989 census, the proportion of Kazakhstan’s non-Russian population that could speak Russian fluently was 72.8 percent; the proportion of Kazakhs was 64.1 percent.

In the perestroika years, the Kazakhstan Communist Party under the leadership of First Secretary G. Kolbin launched a campaign for developing the Kazakh language. A resolution was adopted by the Central Committee of Kazakhstan’s Communist Party and Council of Ministers, March 3, 1987, No. 98, On improving instruction in the Kazakh language in the republic. In a resolution of August 15, 1989, mention was made of the need for simultaneous interpretation, from Kazakh to Russian and vice versa, during social and political events, during large-scale cultural affairs, and during sessions of the Council of People’s Deputies. This had

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32 *Itogi vsesoiuznoi perepisi naseleniia 1989 goda. Natsional’nyi sostav naseleniia Kazakhskoi SSR, oblasti i g. Alma-Aty* [Alma-Ata, 1991], p. 5.

33 *Ibid*, p. 215.

never been the case before. On this basis, the conception of state Russian-Kazakh bilingualism was formulated.

On September 22, 1989, the law On languages in the Kazakh SSR was adopted. It formulated the commitment, in form and content, of Kazakhstan's party leadership to a Stalinist notion of language: "... language is the greatest attribute and irrevocable characteristic of the nation; the development of language, the extension of its social function is inextricably connected to the flowering of national culture and the nation's future as a historically established and enduring community of people."<sup>34</sup>

It is quite clear that to attribute to language qualities that define an ethnic group's state of cultural development and future perspective of development is to exaggerate the significance of one language and its role in the life of a multiethnic and multilingual society. What, in fact, takes place, is the substitution of culture for one of many its many elements — language; the substitution of society's level of civilization for what is merely a secondary component; the substitution of a people's economic well-being for the sake of language development; the substitution of rights and freedom of the person for language.

This is the basis on which there was adopted the State Program for the Development of Kazakh and Other National Languages in the Kazakh SSR, for the period up to the year 2000. At the same time, a State Commission on Onomastics in the Council of Ministers of the Kazakh SSR was created, along with a republic-level organization known as "Kazak tili."

By a resolution dated December 22, 1989, of the plenum of the Supreme Court of the Kazakh SSR, enabling legislation was adapted On implementing legislation by courts in juridical communications.

A resolution of the Council of Ministers of April 20, 1990, on creation of the State Onomastics Commission, stated that the commission should serve to "revive the national toponymy as an important testament of the history and spiritual culture of the people..." and also "to facilitate in an active manner the formation by the republic's population of a respectful relationship to original national [iskonno narodmoe] and historical names."

The document entitled Mechanism for implementing and realizing the Law on languages in the Kazakh SSR and the Methods for implementing the Kazakh language in various aspects of life (1990) underlined the fact that "the insurmountable barrier to introducing the state language is a series of ... retarding factors. Among the factors that deserve attention is the large share of the Russian-speaking population, which was formed owing to [the large number of] ethnic Russians.

In this way, at the moment at which Kazakhstan achieved independence, the Kazakh language was mainly a language of communication among the Kazakhs, not having gained any significant headway beyond the Kazakh ethnic community. It had never been a language of interethnic interaction. From the end of the 1980s, however, one could clearly see a tendency of attributing to the language functions to which it was not suited; a significant exaggeration of its

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34 N. Masanov and I. Savin, *Kazakhstan. Model' etnologicheskogo monitoringa* [Moscow, 1997], p. 64.

role in the multiethnic society; and an obvious effort to promote Kazakh to the state level. Another tendency has also been observed: to regard Russian as a competing, opponent language. With this as the goal, a corresponding legal and institutional basis was established for imposing Kazakh widely into a system of state communication.

The collapse of the Soviet Union and Kazakhstan's sovereignty noticeably hastened the incorporation of the Kazakh language into the state administrative system and facilitated institutionalization of the language itself as a political instrument for regulating Kazakhstan's society and, most importantly, activity of the state apparatus.

During the discussion in society about the fate of the Kazakh and Russian languages, which was widespread between 1992 to 1993, an unambiguous position was adopted by the state authorities, as represented by President Nazarbaev, his administration, the Council of Ministers, the Supreme Soviet, and [since 1995] the Parliament [a Soviet-style parliament, the Supreme Soviet, continued to work after Kazakhstan's independence. It was replaced by a two-chamber parliament according to the 1995 constitution], as well as by the local administration. The concept was clearly expressed of a single state language in Kazakhstan. The position was reflected in the text of Kazakhstan's first constitution, adopted in 1993, and in the second constitution of 1995.

The Kazakhstan constitution, adopted August 30, 1995, declares: "The state language in the Republic of Kazakhstan is Kazakh" (Article 7, Paragraph 1). Fluency in Kazakh, in accordance with the constitution, is a requirement for the post of president (Article 41, Paragraph 2) and chairmen of the Senate and the Mazhilis of Parliament (Article 58, Paragraph 1).

In accordance with the official interpretation by Kazakhstan's Constitutional Council, (Resolution of Kazakhstan's Constitutional Council, October 9, 1998, No. 9/2, "the term 'fluent in the state language' [svobodno vladeiushchii gosudarstvennym iazykom] ought to be interpreted as the ability in Kazakh to read, write grammatically, and to give verbal expression to one's thoughts in public without any difficulty."

On July 11, 1997, a new law, No. 151-1, On languages in the Republic of Kazakhstan, was adopted. Previously, on November 4, 1996, by directive of the president, a decree entitled On the conception of language policy in the Republic of Kazakhstan, was issued. On August 14, 1998, a resolution of Kazakhstan's government entitled On broadening the range of use of the state language in state organs was updated and amended on January 8, 1999. By a government resolution of January 8, 1999, a document was adopted entitled Provisions for determining adherence to legislation on languages. On February 7, 2001, by decree of President Nazarbaev, an initiative was confirmed bearing the title State program for use and development of languages from the years 2001 to 2010.

At the same time, on the regional and central levels, various government departments have adopted enabling legislation on switching over to Kazakh in official communications. Thus, the Ministry of Justice alone issued the following directives: On realization of the law of the Republic of Kazakhstan On languages in the Republic of Kazakhstan, May 4, 1998; On

instructions regarding the moral and material support of the employees of the institutions of the courts and justice system of Kazakhstan, who conduct work in the state language of the Republic of Kazakhstan, and who are successfully learning the state language, June 22, 1999; and Rules for instruction in the state language and testing the level of knowledge of the state language of employees of the courts and justice system of the Republic of Kazakhstan, April 15, 2000.

In this way, the relevant legal and institutional bases were established for the transition to use of Kazakh for all activities of state bodies. As the law On the languages in the Republic of Kazakhstan, July 11, 1997, states: “The state language of the Republic of Kazakhstan is Kazakh. The state language is the language of state administration, legislation, legal affairs, and general communication [deloproizvodstvo] that is effective in all civic affairs on the state’s entire territory” (Article 4).

The use of Kazakh is most widespread in conversational usage and among the Kazakh rural and marginal population. It is required for family and day-to-day relations. It also plays an important role in government organizations, state educational institutions, and state-owned mass media. Outside state structures, however, the Kazakh language is little in evidence. Most independent media, whether print or electronic, use Russian. Instruction at the majority of private institutions of higher education is conducted in Russian. The greatest part of actual communication and printed matter sold is in Russian. This is true of literature concerning the arts, sciences, semi-scholarly fields, journalism, and instruction.

In contrast to this fact stands Kazakhstan’s law On languages in the Republic of Kazakhstan, which confirms the ideology that “the state language is the most important consolidating factor for the people of Kazakhstan” (Article 4).

What is actually concealed by the language [policy of] kazakhization of administration in all organs of power [vlast’]? As a matter of fact, in the view of many scholars in contemporary Kazakhstan, the Kazakh language, on the basis of the above-mentioned legislation adopted in the past decade, became in the 1980s the most important means and weapons of political struggle. It now is one of the most effective tools of an ethnocentric policy.

The law On languages in the Republic of Kazakhstan indicates this directly, speaking about the fact that “the subject regulated by the current law is social relations as they concern the use of language and in the affairs of the state, of nongovernmental organizations, and local, self-governing bodies” (Article 2). This definition makes it possible to draw the conclusion that, as far as the Kazakh ethnocracy is concerned, the Kazakh language serves as an important institution and mechanism for monopolizing authority.

In its analysis of the current state of the Kazakh language, the document State program for use and development of languages from the years 2001 to 2010 states that “a tendency has been observed toward the increase in the demand for the use of the state language in the system of state organs. The most noticeable results in this regard have been achieved in regions where the population is overwhelmingly Kazakh.... In the central executive organs, thanks to

purposeful work in expanding the employment of the state language, an increase in use has been observed.

“Despite the results achieved, however, it should be noted that the degree to which the potential of the state language has been realized by government organs remains insufficient. Among state employees, there are few specialists with a command of the state language adequate for performing their duties.”<sup>35</sup>

Furthermore, “The process has begun of introducing the state language into the Armed Forces of the Republic of Kazakhstan. The formation of contemporary Kazakh military terminology is taking place...

“Gradually, the role of the state language in the educational system is increasing. According to data from the Ministry of Education and Sciences, of the country’s 3.5 million school students in the 1999-2000 academic year, 1.6 million were taught in Kazakh and 1.5 million in Russian... By the year 2000, about 32 percent of students, or 85,300, were in departments where Kazakh was the language of instruction; about 68 percent of students, or 181,000, were in departments where the language of instruction was Russian...

“Special attention has been devoted to creation and refinement of a terminological basis for Kazakh. The State Terminological Commission has approved 610 new terms... At the present time, 64 regions, 8 cities, and 420 *auls* or settlements have received new names... There has been a general increase in the number of dissertations, both doctorate and candidate of sciences, defended in the state language. The number, however, remains insignificant: in 1999, it represented only 14 percent of all dissertations defended in the republic (174 of 1267).”<sup>36</sup>

Thus, the Kazakh language strengthens its position in those spheres of public life that are subject to state control, mainly owing to direct state lobbying and support. Nevertheless, it remains rather weak in those spheres where state regulation is not widespread. Consequently, it is natural that Kazakhstan’s authorities strive to “provide for the functioning of the state language as the language of state administration.”<sup>37</sup>

In the view of a number of investigators, the Kazakh language can free itself from political ideology only if a broad intellectual infrastructure is created on its basis in the Kazakh language, in the form of thousands and thousands of literary works and computer programs translated into the language. Creation of such an infrastructure would allow Kazakh to become a self-sufficient linguistic phenomenon and a necessary means of communication; it would provide for its complete functioning in state and society. One can hardly count on this, however, in light of the extremely high level of corruption among state officials and the very nature of Kazakhstan’s authoritarianism.

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<sup>35</sup> *Kazakhstanskaia pravda*, February 17, 2001.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

## **Indigenous peoples, aborigines, and autochtones**

Right up to the middle of the twentieth century, the concepts of “aborigines” and “autochtones” carried a disparaging and discriminatory character. They were employed with respect to conquered and defeated peoples, “barbarians” situated at a primitive stage of development and lacking a state and other basic attributes of civilization: cities, literacy, communications, monotheism. They were incapable of resisting civilized, enlightened, and developed states in their colonization and possession of new territory.

The collapse of empires and the erection of a new world order on the basis of the ideas of humanism, social justice, and human rights resulted in the twentieth century in a significant transformation of many terms and concepts. Given a newly ethnicized world, the concepts aborigines and autochtones, as well as the newly coined “indigenous peoples,” have become a serious instrument in the struggle for political rights and independent statehood. Among the marginal intelligentsia, the leader of “national liberation movements,” and the independence fighter, these concepts have acquired a new political meaning. Their employment has become an important argument for proof of the priority of their rights and claims to power and independent statehood.

These concepts have henceforth become widespread, and they are actively used and employed in political lexicon by various peoples and states. The actualization of terms and concepts that are so closely related to ideas of ethnicity in the 20th century was directly tied to ethnic oppositions. Indigenous peoples constantly contrast their indigenous character to that of migrants and diasporas. An ideology has been created of indigenous peoples who have a natural and undeniable right to national revanshism and compensation for their having been colonized.

Indigenous peoples always and everywhere make appeals to their supposed or actual autochtony or aboriginal origins. On this basis, they constantly ethnicize and lay claim to not only language, history, culture, cities, and civilization but to territory, power, government, ideology, and statehood.

Thus, for example, beginning in the eighteenth century, most researchers came to the conclusion — and they still believe this is so — that Kazakhs represent the descendants of the late immigrants to Kazakhstan’s territory and are in no way linked to the region’s ancient populations. After the creation in 1920 of the Kazakh Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic, an ideology began to be formed regarding the autochthonous character of the Kazakhs. In his 1925 book *Materialy k istorii kirgiz-kazakskogo naroda*, M. Tynyshpaev was one of the first who, despite the historical facts, strived to prove the antiquity, origins, and autochtony of the Kazakhs.

In an introduction to this work, a certain Tokhtybaev wrote: “Now, when the Communist Party and Soviet power carries out a firm policy of making equal the rights of the oppressed nationalities and the creation of national Soviet republics, it is necessary more than ever before to study and analyze properly the past and to consider present circumstances. Now,

when Kazakh statehood is being achieved, a proper understanding and explication of the Kazakhs' past are a sign of the successful implementation of Soviet civic-mindedness [obshchestvennosti] among Kazakhs and their acculturation [priobshcheniia] to socialism." As we can see, the need to write new history is motivated by political exigency and demands for a new social order. This ought to correspond-completely to a people's new "garb," i.e. status.

A rather primitive logic lies at the basis of these sorts of judgments: "While we were oppressed, we had one kind of history; now we have a state, and we ought to have another history written." In reading Tynyshpaev's book, one cannot help but notice the effort to prove the autochtony and aboriginal character of the Kazakhs. Thus, quite naturally, he comes to the conclusion that the Kazakhs as a people were formed on the brink of the first millennium.<sup>38</sup>

Interestingly, in the subsequent period, all authors, who were ethnic Kazakhs, sought to prove the antiquity, autochtony, and aboriginal character of the Kazakhs. As examples, one can cite the works of the following authors: M. B. Akhinzhanov, Kh. Adilgireev, B. Kumekova, O. Ismagulov, among others. Various editions of the book *Istoriia Kazakhskoi SSR* have firmly established in public consciousness the Kazakh's autochtony; when sovereignty rang out, the privileged basis for the rights of Kazakhs on Kazakhstan's territory was laid to rest on the firm ideological foundation of autochtony and aboriginal origins.

In his book *V potoke istorii*, President Nursultan Nazarbaev put forward the following striking assertion, having in mind, probably, himself: "The drama of an active politician is history's coattails that is present in his every action and utterance, whether it is of a creative or destructive nature. It is not important whether an actor himself in political theater understands this or not. What is important is that unseen force, which alternately clears and clouds a sense of practical and current affairs, is constantly present."<sup>39</sup>

Appeals to their status as indigenous people, on the basis of a historical past by means of "objective" and "eternal" historical knowledge, have given Kazakhs, like many other titular nations, rights and arguments for political dominance during the Soviet period and especially afterward. In the years of independence, Nazarbaev writes, "Kazakhs received firm psychological bases to consider their nation as an autonomous and independent subject of world history."<sup>40</sup>

In this connection A. K. Akishev has an interesting idea: that "a significant portion of the historically autochthonous or 'indigenous population'... in the states of Central Asia have, by various measures, experienced a revival, foundation or actualization of certain cultural and worldview orientations... In a way, these are quasi-traditions or their simulations: they reflect authorities' striving to create for themselves a comfortable or acceptable population type and to control and manage the state's ethnocultural situation and worldview as much as possible."<sup>41</sup>

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38 M. Tynyshpaev, *Materialy k istorii kirgiz-kazakskogo naroda*, [n. p., 1925] p. 53.

39 N. Nazarbaev, *V potoke istorii*, p. 4.

40 N. Nazarbaev, *V potoke istorii*, p. 16.

41 A. K. Akishev, "Starye platia novykh khanov," p. 101.

Thus, one can conclude that the concept of “indigenous people,” autochtones, and aborigines has no real scientific or historical basis. In civic consciousness, these concepts are, as a rule, merely a means, instrument, and mechanism for setting the rights of one ethnic group above those of others. Beyond political speculation, these terms and concepts make no sense and have no content. In the best of circumstances, they serve in an axiological sense or for designating ancient peoples and tribes.

## **Diasporas**

Contemporary historiography defines diasporas as population groups living beyond the boundaries of their apparent historical homeland or primary territory of settlement. Most frequently, however, especially in nonscholarly circles, diasporas are considered those groups of the population that live outside their state formation.

V. A. Shirelman has a rather different view on this problem; he understands a diaspora “not as any settlement outside the original ethnic settlement [areal] but that which necessarily results as a consequence of pressure from inauspicious circumstances (war, hunger, forcible deportation, etc.)<sup>42</sup>

At the same time, researchers consider it impossible to regard as diasporas groups that live temporarily outside their historical homeland, in the capacity of seasonal and contract workers, service personnel, and intellectuals. Diasporas are not temporary migrants but population groups that have firmly settled outside their state and have taken root in the state of residence.

Yet, there are cases in which diasporas are a temporary phenomenon that is overcome when people become full-fledged members of a community after receiving the citizenship of the country of residence. In Western Europe, diaspora is a changing and weakly expressed quantity, especially for residents of the European Union. In principle, it is not an eternal or in any way significant category, even for migrants from other countries and continents.

In postwar Western Europe, Italians and Portuguese living and working outside Italy and Portugal were considered diasporas. Upon being naturalized and gaining full-fledged citizenship of the countries in which they resided, they ceased to constitute diasporas. In more recent times, Turks and Croats have become diasporas in Germany, Belgium, Holland, Austria, and other countries. At the present time, diasporas are most frequently considered migrant groups that do not yet possess citizenship in their country of residence.

Yet, the basis of individual identification among members of diasporas is not ethnic or confessional identification. Rather, in the West the main identifying or differentiating trait is citizenship or, frequently, size of population. As a rule, diasporas are always communities in places of regional settlement rather than separate individuals.

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<sup>42</sup> V. A. Shirel'man, “Mify diaspory,” *Diaspory*, 1999, nos. 2-3, p. 6.

In Western Europe, diasporas are not only those groups that do not enjoy official recognition in the host country but also those groups that, consciously or unconsciously, preserve their differences in language, culture, customs, traditions, and even in manner of living. A diaspora does not always mean discrimination. Instead, it can be a call or demonstration of one's difference, distinctiveness, and peculiarity. It is always a claim to social recognition of one's peculiarity.

In the countries of Western Europe, up until a point in time, diasporas can be considered all emigrants, for example, from the former Soviet Union, regardless of their ethnic, confessional, or other identification. In the West, they are designated by the term "Russians," which carries a geographical and linguistic, rather than an ethnic, character. This is precisely like the situation among Sephardic Jews, Arabs, and Berbers from Northern Africa in France, who are much closer to one another in the first diaspora generation than Ashkenazi and Sephardic Jews are to one another. By the second generation, however, the situation fundamentally changes: their offspring consider themselves French or plain and simple Jews, rather than emigrants from the Maghreb.

The situation is different, for example, in post-Soviet countries: full-fledged citizens of an ethnicity other than the titular group are regarded as diasporas, as are population groups that have lived for centuries on a given territory and whose children have always considered their country of residence to be their historical homeland.

Thus, for example, in Kazakhstan the law On languages in the Republic of Kazakhstan, July 11, 1997, no. 151-I, asserts that "a diaspora is a segment of the people (an ethnic community) living outside the country of its historical origin."<sup>43</sup> So it turns out that in Kazakhstan, within the ranks of diasporas, the country's entire non-Kazakh population is automatically included: in particular, Russians, Uighurs, Germans, Tatars, Bashkir, Uzbeks, whose ancestors have lived in the territory of Kazakhstan for centuries.

In this case, membership in a diaspora carries with it the status of a latent and hidden inferiority and lack of completeness. These put a limit on a person's life and activities; set obvious barriers on the path to social development and career growth; and limit spiritual and personal freedom, making him dependent on external and subjective factors and criteria.

A number of researchers believe that there were no diasporas in the former Soviet Union but now a mechanism of "diasporization" has been set in motion. At the same time, the idea of diasporization is understood as "intergration into the social community of the host country without any loss of identity."<sup>44</sup> One can clarify this by adding in post-Soviet space, diasporization signifies, in fact, "integration without taking on the identity of the ruling group," and thus it does not mean taking on the rights and status of the dominant group.

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43 *Osnovnye zakonodatel'nye akty o iazykakh v Respublike Kazakhstan. Ofitsial'nye teksty po sostoiانيu na 1 oktiabria 2000 g.* [Almaty, 2000], p. 5.

44 S. Gradirovskii, "Rossiia i postsovetskie gosudarstva: iskushenie diasporal'noi politiki," *Diaspory*, nos. 2-3, 1999, pp. 44-45.

Diasporas, within the frameworks of the ethnocentric model of state-political formations, are openly pushed to the periphery of civil society. The state's ideological machine, which expresses the quasi-interests of the so-called indigenous population, limits diasporas' rights, openly declaring the privileged position of the autochtones. Thus diasporas are deliberately transformed into the ranks of internal diaspora immigrants; their citizenship status in the context of their real rights becomes a legal fiction, whereas, with regard to responsibilities, the burdens [on diasporas] increase insofar as they become an object of discrimination. Such burdens are inadequate for the mechanisms for representing their interests.

In other words, Kazakhstan's diasporas have asymmetrical rights and obligations. This is characteristic of all post-Soviet, apartheid models of state formation. In fact, diaspora is a diminished political status, membership to which significantly reduces an individual's range of actual rights and entails political discrimination. Membership in a diaspora is usually understood by the state as the absence of privileged rights according to length of residence on a given territory. Thus a diaspora is deliberately counterposed by the ethnocentric state against the concept of the indigenous population.

A consequence of this quite natural process of diasporization — that is, hidden, de facto discrimination by the state — is a strong attitude toward migration among “internal immigrants.” Thus, practically all diaspora groups in Kazakhstan show a negative migration balance (see table).

It should be emphasized that the majority of “new diasporas” leave not for their historical homelands, from which their ancestors came to Kazakhstan, but to neighboring Russia or to the “far abroad” [Foreign countries except the former Soviet republics]. Thus, for example, Jews, for the overwhelming majority of whom their historical homeland is Eastern Europe, emigrate mainly to Israel. In other words, the choice of a country of residence is determined not by ethnic factors themselves but mainly by political and economic factors. The most striking example of this is the emigration of the German population to Germany. For them, ethnic factors were actualized by state policy.

Yet, the overwhelming majority of diasporas represent ethnic minorities. Thus, it is important to consider this problem in the context of ethnic stereotypes, which, as we have emphasized, have “infected” the entire post-Soviet population.

### **Ethnic minorities in Kazakhstan**

Among the extraordinary complex set of interethnic problems, one of the most complex is that of so-called ethnic minorities — that is, ethnic groups that are small in number, that are situated, as it were, on the periphery of political life, and that owing to society's stereotypes and their status within it, are alienated from the government's ideological and socio-cultural priorities.

It is true that the question of whether someone is or should be regarded as an ethnic minority is a rather ambiguous and very complex question; it remains the prerogative of ethnic

minorities themselves, individual states, and the international community, because this problem in civic consciousness also has a universal character. So, for example, an ethnic minority in Austria is considered those citizens who do not speak German. In Germany, representatives of non-German ethnic groups, for example, Danes, are classed among minorities.

In general, the interpretation of an ethnic minority as a diaspora (a population group living outside its ethnic state) is quite widespread. Thus, Hungarians or Albanians in former Yugoslavia are termed ethnic minorities, as are Turks in Germany.<sup>45</sup>

In many states, numerical determinants are used for defining ethnic minorities. Thus, in Sweden, the government has declared that a group of no fewer [sic] than one hundred persons is to be considered a minority. In Stalin's time, the frequently used cut-off point was one million persons: any group with membership below this figure was considered a minority.

As scholars legitimately point out, there are many problems that arise in employing numerical criteria. A group that, in terms of proportion of a country's population, represents a minority, may be a majority in a particular, concrete region. And, as most researchers note, a strictly arithmetical approach — i.e., 50 percent of the dominant ethnos, minus one person — is inappropriate.<sup>46</sup>

Other criteria besides these are used: racial differences (Afro-Americans in the United States, among others); backwardness in terms of civilizational development; so called indigenous peoples or aborigines; alienation from authority; residence outside one's historical homeland; residence outside main place of residence of one's ethnos; cultural and historical peculiarities; religious and confessional differences; language factors; and so on. In addition, there are many countries (e.g., France, England) that as a matter of principle do not recognize ethnic minorities among their citizens.<sup>47</sup>

There are various approaches to this problem in the scholarly literature. Thus, some researchers believe that “a group of persons may be considered a national minority if it is smaller and less influential than other population groups in a state or that state's constituents (an autonomous unit for a nationality [natsionalno-gosudarstvennoi sub'ekt] or administrative unit), in which territory a given group lives and from the population of which it differs by national, cultural, and other characteristics, which members of this given group regards as the basis for their belonging to this group for the purpose of self-preservation and development of these characteristics.”<sup>48</sup> If we proceed from this sort of understanding of ethnic minority, then, for

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45 O. Miuntsberg, *Mezhdunarodnoe pravo i etnicheskie men'shinstva* [Warsaw, 1993].

46 S. V. Cheshko, “Etnicheskie men'shinstva v politiko-pravovoi sisteme sovremennogo obshchestva,” *Prava i status natsional'nykh men'shinstv v byvshem SSSR* [Moscow, 1993]; [author missing] *Gosudarstvo, pravo i mezhnatsional'nye otnosheniia v stranakh Zapadnoi demokratii* [Moscow, 1993].

47 For further details, see I. S. Krylova and N. S. Krylova, “Problema men'shinstv v praktike pravovogo regulirovaniia mezhnatsional'nykh otnoshenii,” *Gosudarstvo, pravo i mezhnatsional'nye otnosheniia v stranakh Zapadnoi demokratii; Prava i status natsional'nykh men'shinstv v byvshem SSSR* [Moscow, 1993]

48 I. S. Krylova and N. S. Krylova, p. 79.

example, we would have to recognize practically the entire non-Kazakh population in Kazakhstan, without exception, as it is de facto different and it in word wants to maintain this difference.

Other researchers include within the category of ethnic minority first of all those groups that, regardless of size, are alienated from the government [vlast] and are in an oppressed state or are wards of a politically dominant ethnos. In other words, they give priority to political factors. In this respect, it is quite obvious that the supposedly personal problem of ethnic minorities grows into a more general problem: the political and legal structure of the country and society as a whole.<sup>49</sup>

Here we set upon a key aspect of the problem: the recognition by oneself and by others as an ethnic minority depends on many factors, most importantly the form of the state and political structure. In the totalitarian state, all minority groups with respect to the dominant ethnos, whether diasporas or aborigines, felt themselves to be “natsmeny,” that is, national minorities, and they had no real place in the civil life of the country (Germany, Japan, Spain, the Soviet Union, etc).

In ethnocratic states — and these include practically all post-Soviet countries — this situation has actually been inherited defacto, in many of them, legally constituted. In a de jure sense in these countries, all nondominant ethnic groups feel that their modus vivendi is as ethnic minorities against the background of the formally ruling ethnos. At the same time, such minorities are not minorities in a legal sense. The concept of natural right in such states is recognized only with respect to the dominant group.

In democratic states, regardless of the priority accorded to civil rights, there are also many ethnic groups that regard themselves as and de facto are minorities (for example, in the United States, Afro-Americans, Native Americans, Hispanics, etc.; in Western Europe, Arabs, Turks, “blacks,” Slavs, Jews, etc.). At the same time, even the recognition of a natural right is not always transformed into a formal right.

In fact, a minority is any population group that is situated on the periphery of civic life; that hypostatizes and understands its differences (racial, language, ethnic, religious-confessional, numerical representation) as the reason for its alienation and marginality and whose solidarity rests on this basis. Yet such a wide understanding of minority broadens the category to include groups whose identifying traits are class, cast, age, sex, and many other social communities and groups in a state of rejection or marginality.

Thus, this characteristic ought to be clarified by a sociocultural component such as ethnicity, which predetermines one’s status and in some way establishes a sacral inheritance of status from one’s ancestors in a particular sociocultural context. Ethnicity stems from the actual recognition of an individual’s particular status, on the basis of his origin or the origin of the group to which he has been artificially consigned. In this way, the principle is postulated of

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49 S. V. Cheshko, pp. 12-13.

difference in origin, as the main differentiating characteristic in human cultural and biosocial variety, and civic identification and determination of one's status.

As a result — to a large extent artificially — there have been created various models for the functioning of cultural characteristics and various methods of transmitting and circulating information in society. Thus a certain self-sufficiency and relative exclusivity has been secured of the group, which in the short historical term can be overcome in only one way: by the individual's adoption and subsequent incorporation, and then by the mythologization and mystification, of this mechanism in the civic consciousness.

Finally, there is a realization and the strengthening — *de facto*, sometimes *de jure* — by moral, legal, and social norms, and by stereotypes and social stations of marginality, shunning, alienation, discrimination, illegitimacy, second-class status, inferiority, uncomplementary, and peripheral nature of this form of ethnicity, of the given model of cultural development. This inevitable damage, however, caused by one's belonging to an ethnic minority became apparent only through its consecration by state institutions.

Thus, ethnic minorities essentially constitute the following:

First, any ethnic group situated on the periphery of society, where an individual's ethnic affiliation in one way or another limits the parameters of social functioning and personal development, affects the individual's degree of social recognition, places barriers in the way of self-realization and freedom of choice, and makes a person a prisoner of group identity and status; when the priorities of a society's sociocultural stratification, its stereotypes, normative frameworks, and moral foundation place pressure upon and dominate an individual, distinguishing him from other individuals and, in the process of real social development, lower his level of competitiveness and facilitate his sociocultural incompetence.

Second, any ethnic group that interprets its marginal or peripheral character as the result of its peculiarity or difference from the dominant group, as established from a huge set of characteristics. These characteristics are consecrated morally and by public consciousness (frequently, they are even constituted by state institutions). Thus, such a group expresses solidarity on this basis in order to overcome, but more frequently to explain and even to consecrate, the limitation that its status places on its potential.

Third, any ethnic group that constantly encounters actual discrimination from other groups as well as from the ruling social norms, stereotypes, morality, and form of consciousness. Most importantly, such a group experiences the "burden of indifference," alienation, and the disdain with which it is treated, sometimes blatant pressure from state institutions toward its specific demands, interests, and needs.

Clearly, this enumeration of characteristics of ethnic minorities is not exhaustive; it relates to just that aspect of social discourse concerning mutual relations of state and the dominant stereotypes in society toward ethnic and cultural minority groups. Those stereotypes deny certain individuals, legitimacy and recognition of their status.

If, in this regard, we consider the interethnic context in Kazakhstan, then of the more than one hundred officially registered peoples, we can regard as ethnic minorities a very small

group of ethnic communities, because although the majority of them experience discrimination in an ethnocratic state, they do not regard this as the main cause for their marginality, and they do not express solidarity or make demands with respect to themselves upon state policy. Some of these groups have a unique response to their peripheral character: for example, they become conscious of it from without, from the state structure of their historical homeland, and they articulate their alienation by mass emigration.

In this regard, obvious ethnic minorities in the former Soviet Union, always *de facto* diasporas, are Germans and Jews, the majority of whom have emigrated to Germany and Israel. Similarly, Poles and Russians have left in massive numbers for their historical homelands (in the past seven to eight years, nearly two million Russians have relocated from other republics of the former Soviet Union).

It is more complicated to account for those ethnic groups, such as Koreans and Uighurs, who do not emigrate in large numbers. On the one hand, though these are not obvious diaspora groups, there are sharp views regarding their having been resettled in the territory of Kazakhstan. Moreover, these groups are well aware of their political “illegitimacy,” but they express their particular demands and interests in a rather weak manner.

The voice of Uighur ethnic minority is, perhaps, heard somewhat louder. Its demands include full autonomy and even a far-fetched claim to autochtony.<sup>50</sup> One can hear in this asynchronous choir weak efforts by various peoples of the Northern Caucasus and the Caucasus (Chechens, Armenians, and others) to make themselves known. But, generally, only Koreans and Uighurs, and to a lesser extent, Germans and Poles, are prepared to seek minority status.

It should, in general, be noted that three diasporas most closely fit the definition of ethnic minority: Germans, Koreans, and Uighurs. These relate to three particular sets of sociocultural stereotypes and value orientations as they are understood by themselves and interpreted by other ethnoses. To a certain degree, these are three groups that articulate their particular interests and demands with respect to language and culture and even discuss administrative-territorial autonomy (the Germans in Akmola *oblast*, and the Uighurs in Almaty *oblast*). In this connection, it should be emphasized that there is a certain degree of lobbying for these particular interests and even the rights of these ethnic groups in Kazakhstan at the interstate level (from Germany, Korea, and Poland), or blatant discrimination against them owing to outside pressure (against the Uighurs).

Of particular interest, of course, is what representatives of minority groups themselves believe about who ought to be considered an ethnic minority. In their view, an ethnic minority represents primarily those people who live outside the boundaries of their historical homeland, that is, a diaspora. This view, according to a survey we conducted in 1996, is supported by the following percentage of Kazakhstan’s minority groups, most of them residents of Almaty: 56.4 percent of Koreans, 46.6 percent of Germans, and 33.5 percent of Uighurs. For their part, those

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<sup>50</sup> See, for example, the work of M. Kabirov.

respondents who live on the periphery (Germans of Akmola, Koreans of Ushtobe, Uighurs of Chundzh) consider ethnic minorities to be primarily those groups that are small in numbers (55.1 percent of Uighurs surveyed, 50.7 percent of Koreans, and 46.1 percent of Germans). Yet another definition of ethnic minority — peoples who are alienated from the authorities [vlast] — was professed by 19.8 percent of Uighurs, 14.0 percent of Germans, and mere 6.6 percent of Koreans.

Interestingly, to the question, “Do you consider yourself a member of an ethnic minority?”, the following percentages responded positively: 50.9 percent of Uighurs, 47.7 percent of Germans, and 42.7 percent of Koreans. Those not considering themselves an ethnic minority were 21.2 percent of Koreans, 12.6 percent of Uighurs, and 12.4 percent of Germans. A roughly similar percentage of each ethnic group considered themselves simply citizens of Kazakhstan: 37.8 percent of Germans, 35.8 percent of Koreans, and 35.3 percent of Uighurs.

Only a small number of respondents favored introduction of ethnic minority status, which would give certain benefits to its holders: 18.3 percent of Uighurs, 12.5 percent of Koreans, and 11.4 percent of Germans. The smallest level of support was expressed among respondents to the idea of a deethnicized, civic relationship to ethnic minorities (6 to 8 percent of those surveyed). This attests to a paternalistic attitude and the lack of understanding regarding the priority of the civic approach to the problem.<sup>51</sup>

Thus, just like the terms native peoples, autochtones, and aborigines, the concepts of ethnic minority and diaspora are used only for political purposes and have no other real sense. Beyond the political dimension, all of these terms are devoid of content and sense. They are employed solely in a political sense and signify the privilege or humiliated position of ethnic communities.

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<sup>51</sup> N. E. Masanov, *Polozhenie etnicheskikh men' shinstv v suverennom Kazakhstane* [Almaty, 1997].