

THE IMPACT OF CULTURAL POLICY ON NATIONAL IDENTITY IN KAZAKHSTAN: AN EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

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Abstract

The nation-building process in modern Kazakhstan faces the challenge of forming a consolidated territorial community. Citizens of the country are confronted with a choice between Kazakh and Kazakhstani identity, navigating between its ethnic and nation-state variations. Cultural policy is intended to facilitate national consolidation by minimizing ethnocultural contradictions within the state. The objective of this study is to examine the impact of cultural policy on Kazakhstan's national identity through empirical analysis. The study adopts a cultural and politico-cultural approach, focusing on the influence of Kazakh culture and the mentality of the Kazakh people on state formation. Additionally, a constructivist methodology is applied to analyze the role of governmental and non-governmental institutions in shaping political reality. A survey was conducted using a quantitative research method. Data collection was carried out through the CAWI (Computer-Assisted Web Interviewing) technique and a structured questionnaire developed in advance. The findings reveal that ethnic Kazakhs exhibit a strong attachment to the Kazakh language and cultural events, whereas ethnic Russians tend to maintain a closer connection to their own language and traditions. Ethnic Russians demonstrate lower participation in Kazakh cultural life and significant resistance to

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the transition of the Kazakh language to the Latin alphabet. The survey results highlight the significant influence of the Soviet legacy on the formation of national identity, indicating the transitional nature of Kazakhstan's national identity. At the same time, the findings show that ethnic Kazakhs emphasize their ethnic identity, whereas ethnic Russians and other groups tend to lean toward a civic identity, reflecting their attachment to the state and its history. Kazakhstan's cultural policy encourages all ethnic groups to engage more deeply with Kazakh culture and is closely linked to language policy. A cultural policy aimed at expanding participation in linguistic and cultural activities contributes to greater ethnic harmony and strengthens the sense of national belonging among Kazakhstan's citizens.

Keywords: *civic identity, nation-building, cultural policy, national identity, national-state identity, nation, language policy*

1 INTRODUCTION

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, fifteen national states emerged across the Eurasian region. Since most of these newly independent states had historically lacked their own statehood, they faced two interconnected challenges: the formation of a civic nation and the establishment of state institutions. A similar challenge persists in contemporary Kazakhstan, a multiethnic state characterized by social contradictions and ethnic divisions, highlighting the need for political community consolidation. At the time of the country's independence, ethnic Kazakhs, the titular peoples, comprised less than half of the population. As a result, issues of national and civic identity remain among the most pressing concerns in modern Kazakhstan.

National identity is linked to national culture and shared historical traditions, while ethnic identity is tied to belonging to a specific ethnic group, and civic identity is associated with affiliation with the state and its values. National-state identity represents a synthesis of national and civic identity, reflecting an individual's self-perception as a member of a particular nation within the context of a specific state.

In Kazakhstan, national-state identity holds particular significance as it unites the population around shared values such as the state language, the language of interethnic communication; the national emblem, the flag; and historical and cultural traditions. National-state identity fosters the development of a multicultural society, promoting unity and harmony among different ethnic groups while simultaneously reinforcing a collective national consciousness among all citizens. Understanding this, Kazakhstan seeks to construct an image of a country that, while shaping its own national identity, also respects and acknowledges the identities of other ethnic groups.

In the process of state-building, cultural policy plays a crucial role by simultaneously promoting Kazakh culture as a priority and preserving the

cultural diversity of the multiethnic society. Kazakhstan actively advances and disseminates Kazakh culture on international platforms through cultural diplomacy, aiming to introduce the richness of Kazakh culture to the global community. The country's cultural policy is oriented toward achieving international recognition of Kazakh culture while also strengthening Kazakhstan's cultural identity on the global stage (Ozkan, 2023).

The aim of this article is to examine the impact of cultural policy on national identity in Kazakhstan through empirical analysis.

2 THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF NATIONAL IDENTITY IN THE CULTURAL CONTEXT

In recent decades, the significance of culture in political practice has increased, along with the reciprocal influence of politics on culture. This has contributed to the development of the cultural paradigm in political science. The most extensively developed concept within this paradigm is political culture, where the cultural approach was first applied. K. Welzel, referring to anthropologists, argues that "political culture can be studied in all societies" (Welzel, 2016).

The study of political culture was first undertaken by American researchers G. Almond and S. Verba, who, in the early 1960s, conducted a comparative analysis of different types of political awareness, people's attitudes toward authority and politics, their sense of obligation to participate in politics, civic competence, political socialization, civic culture, and democratic stability. According to Almond and Verba, "*civic culture is a political culture of moderation*" (Almond, Verba, 1963, p. 368). Almond and Verba justify their conclusion with the following arguments: First, strong emotional involvement in politics threatens the balance between activity and passivity, as maintaining this balance is associated with the relatively low significance of politics. Second, such political engagement leads to an increase in political stakes, creating a favorable environment for messianic mass movements that undermine democratic stability (Almond, Verba, 1963, p. 355).

As key elements of political culture, Almond identifies political institutions, such as interest groups, parties, and the state, that perform governance functions in society, as well as political orientations that influence individual behavior, such as the values, beliefs, and ideals of society's members.

Within the framework of the cultural paradigm, Lijphart (1997) introduced the concept of "consociational societies," influenced by the idea of mixed cultures and the necessity of accounting for them in societies transitioning to democracy, which is an issue particularly relevant for post-Soviet states, including Kazakhstan. As Lijphart (1997) emphasizes, "the question of reconciling democracy with deep internal divisions in society has become the primary challenge in today's world" (p. 13).

However, as Almond and Verba (1963) noted, the development of civic culture, which is essential for establishing a stable democracy, should occur gradually. A major challenge for newly emerging states is that such gradual development is often unfeasible, as they attempt to accomplish in a short period what took centuries to develop in the West, making the evolution of political culture a complex and nonlinear process (Almond, Verba, 1963, pp. 369–370).

In contemporary concepts of political culture developed in the 21st century, the constructivist approach has become dominant, which emphasizes the fluidity of cultures, their interactions, the absence of rigid boundaries, the possibility of cultural construction, and their immersion in historical contexts (Smelser, Baltes, 2001). New interpretations of political culture have emerged, such as the postmodernist perspective, which pays particular attention to marginalized groups (Berube, 2001).

The cultural paradigm suggests that political actions and concepts are influenced by the specific cultural characteristics of a given society, including its political culture. A significant contribution to the study of the relationship between politics and culture (or civilization) was made by S. Huntington, who argued that countries exhibit different political behaviors shaped by their distinct cultural backgrounds. He advocated for the acceptance of multiple cultural approaches in political science, each rooted in an authentic cultural framework. While the Western cultural paradigm dominated political thought in the second half of the 20th century, by the late 1990s, Huntington proposed “the possibility of multiple developmental paths, each appropriate to the cultural specificity of a society” (Huntington, 1996, p. 75).

A similar scholarly position was held by Eisenstadt. In his study of the dynamics of civilizations, the Israeli scholar linked these dynamics to cultural transformations, arguing that civilization is characterized by the stability of a specific cultural model, whereas culture itself is more diverse, fluid, and capable of undergoing significant changes in political knowledge over a relatively short period (Eisenstadt, 1999).

According to the ideas of S. Huntington, Russian researchers, V. Fedotova, N. Fedotova, and S. Chugrov, consider the “national model” to be the most appropriate form of societal development. This model suggests that societies should first reach a certain level of Westernization before transitioning to a local or national model based on their own national culture (Chugrov, Fedotova, 2019, p. 400). As a result, political science concepts increasingly focus on the diversity of cultural approaches, particularly in the context of globalization.

Philosopher and political theorist Benhabib views the primary function of culture as establishing a system of reference points that enable individuals to define their place in the world and identify with a particular social community. Turkish scholar Benhabib asserts “culture is inevitably political” (Benhabib, 2003, p. 143). In her book *The Claims of Culture: Equality and Diversity in the Global Era*, Benhabib concludes that as cultures reach a certain level of maturity, they can either foster a mutually enriching dialogue and interaction or create conditions for conflict among their adherents. One could argue that

cultural development toward greater depth enhances intercultural engagement, whereas the increased institutionalization of cultural groups almost inevitably leads to conflicts driven by cultural differences.

According to Benhabib, "culture has become a common synonym for identity, its characteristic and defining feature." Moreover, "identity politics draws the state into cultural wars" (Benhabib, 2003, p. 1). Identity-related conflicts affect not only newly established nation-states but also liberal democracies. F. Fukuyama, for example, highlights the increasing politicization of identity issues, describing it as "one of the greatest threats to modern liberal democracies" (Fukuyama, 2019, p. 23).

Benhabib distinguishes between the social constructivist and narrative understandings of culture. Social constructivism posits that the culture of a group of people is not a given but is formed and transformed over time through customs and practices. In this approach, cultures are seen as networks of meaning that are continuously redefined through the words and actions of their bearers.

The narrative conception of culture, on the other hand, emphasizes the multiplicity and diversity of competing narratives that shape individual self-identification and group loyalties. Cultural narratives also establish boundaries as they distinguish "us" from "them" and "us" from "the other." Identity movements, whether rooted in religious, national, or ethnic motives, seek to solidify these boundaries, effectively freezing the distinctions between groups and cultures in time and space.

In the context of globalization, crisis phenomena have become increasingly apparent, stemming from the end of ideological confrontation and the growing relevance of ethnic issues. In 2004, Huntington wrote, "The crisis of national identity has become a global phenomenon" (Huntington, 2004, pp. 12–13). This conclusion emerged from Huntington's research on identity in the context of cultural groups, a topic that remains relevant two decades later.

The identity issue is most pressing in emerging communities, whether state-based or non-state-based. R. Brubaker characterizes collective identity as "an emotionally charged sense of belonging to a distinct, bounded group, involving both a conscious solidarity or unity with other group members and a deliberate distinction from certain outsiders, often coupled with antipathy toward them" (Brubaker, 2012, p. 99). However, he argues that the term "identity", due to its ambiguity, is not well suited for analytical tasks.

Nevertheless, the term has gained widespread acceptance in academic discourse and is effectively employed by numerous scholars, particularly in the context of national and ethnic identity. For instance, Barth describes ethnic identity as an imperative, asserting that it "takes precedence over most other statuses or social roles that an individual with this identity may assume" (Barth, 2006, p. 20). This issue becomes especially evident in multiethnic societies such as Kazakhstan. The choice between ethnic and national identity presents a significant challenge for newly established states. Since ethnic identity is associated with a culturally unique set of values, it follows that the state must create conditions in which this identity can be meaningfully realized.

The American political scientist F. Fukuyama defines national identity as follows: *"National identity begins with a shared belief in the legitimacy of a country's political system, whether democratic or not. Identity can be enshrined in official laws and institutions that determine how the country's history is taught in schools or which language will be the official national language. However, national identity also extends to the realm of culture and values. It consists of the stories people tell about themselves: where they come from, which holidays they celebrate, what is preserved in their collective historical memory, and what it takes to become a true member of society"* (Fukuyama, 2019, pp. 161–162).

National identity, which encompasses various ethnic identities, is compatible with them only if its bearers' orientation toward social development becomes, according to Semenenko, a key political value and a universally significant social good (Semenenko, 2023, p. 22). However, even in a well-functioning democracy, national identity must not only be accepted as a belief system but also be reinforced through active citizenship (Fukuyama, 2019, p. 202). The situation becomes more complex under a non-democratic regime that lacks these necessary characteristics. According to Magyar and Madlovics, nation-building in Kazakhstan occurred under conditions of a patrimonial autocracy, characterized by *"an informal patrimonial network, the prioritization of elite interests, the dominance of a single network, and informal institutions"* (Magyar, Madlovics, 2022, p. 141). At the same time, the ongoing democratization of Kazakhstani society is expected to contribute to the construction of a Kazakhstani nation that integrates representatives of various ethnic groups on an equal footing.

Constructivism as a methodological approach began to take shape in the 1950s and 1960s. A foundational work in this tradition is the monograph by Berger and Luckmann (1966), *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*, which argues that reality is transformed as social knowledge evolves, suggesting that "man is biologically predestined to construct and to inhabit a world with others" (Berger, Luckmann, 1966, p. 204).

The development of the constructivist methodological approach is further represented in the works of Onuf, the first of which is titled *World of Our Making* (Onuf, 1989). In this work, the American scholar identifies the participants in social relations as agents who possess certain resources, statuses, and roles, and whose behavior is regulated by specific rules. In the process of interaction, agents and rules influence and shape one another. Thus, rules emerge as the key category of analysis, serving as the elements that bind individuals and society together (Onuf, 1998, p. 59).

The leading theorist of social constructivism, Wendt, articulates the core principle of this approach: individuals, both consciously and unconsciously, construct political reality rather than simply encountering it as a given. As he states, "State identities and interests can be collectively transformed within an anarchic context by many factors — individual, domestic, systemic, or transnational — and as such, are an important dependent variable" (Wendt, 1992, p. 424). From his perspective, the central concept in constructivism is the

role of ideas, both collective and individual. Collective ideas, as part of the social structure, shape culture.

Constructivists link the issue of identity to a state's domestic politics. By leveraging material power and discursive influence, a state can project its identity externally, crafting a specific image of the country. This process is particularly significant for emerging national communities.

3 CULTURAL POLICY AND NATIONAL IDENTITY IN KAZAKHSTAN: FINDINGS FROM AN APPLIED STUDY

This study examines the impact of cultural policy on the development of national identity in Kazakhstan, including the country's decision to transition from the Cyrillic to the Latin alphabet (Decree, 2017). The study is based on a survey conducted among a representative sample of participants from various age groups, regions, and ethnic communities in Kazakhstan. The primary objective of this research is to examine public perceptions of this significant change and to assess the broader implications of cultural policy for Kazakhstan's national identity.

The survey consists of ten questions³ designed to assess participants' awareness of cultural policies, their attitudes toward Kazakhstan's cultural heritage and their engagement in local cultural activities. Additionally, it explores participants' connections to their ethnic identity and their views on the role of cultural policies in shaping the national identity.

This study employed the quota sampling method, known for its ability to achieve high representativeness by selecting a sample that reflects the demographic characteristics of the broader population. A total of 382 participants⁴ were surveyed, with equal representation from five major cities in Kazakhstan: Astana (20.2%, n = 77), Aktau (19.9%, n = 76), Almaty (20.2%, n = 77), Semey (19.6%, n = 75), and Shymkent (20.2%, n = 77).

From a gender perspective, the sample was nearly evenly divided: women accounted for 50.3% (n = 192), men for 49.7% (n = 190). This balance closely aligns with Kazakhstan's overall population, according to the 2024 national census, which indicates a slight majority of women (51.14%), men

³ 1. To which age group do you belong? 2. In which area of Kazakhstan do you live? 3. What is your ethnicity? 4. What ethnicity do you identify with? 5. What language do you speak at home and in daily life? 6. How often do you use the Kazakh language in your life? 7. What is your attitude toward the transition to the Latin alphabet in the Kazakh language? 8. How often do you participate in cultural events related to Kazakh culture and traditions? 9. What does being a Kazakhstani mean to you? 10. What, in your opinion, can be done to strengthen and develop Kazakhstan's national identity in the Republic of Kazakhstan?

⁴ "Participants" refers to the number of individuals in each category. To maintain clarity and avoid repetition, "n" is used throughout the study to denote the number of participants in each group.

(48.86%) (Bureau of National Statistics, 2024)⁵. This alignment enhances the reliability of the survey findings and reinforces the representativeness of the sample.

Data analysis was conducted using SPSS 25.0 software, with participants' socio-demographic characteristics and survey responses analyzed through frequencies and percentages. This approach provided a comprehensive overview of the data, offering insights into various demographic factors and their relationship to the study's main focus.

The demographic distribution of participants highlights several key trends, particularly regarding age and gender. The largest proportion of participants (47.9%, $n = 183$) were between the ages of 18 and 35, followed by those in the 35-50 age group (30.4%, $n = 116$). A smaller share (18.8%, $n = 72$) were aged 50 and above, while only 2.9% ($n = 11$) were younger than 18. This distribution indicates that the survey primarily reflects the perspectives of young and middle-aged individuals, with a significant representation of the working-age population.

Furthermore, the relationship between the ethnic affiliation of various groups in Kazakhstan and the national identity they use for self-identification was examined. The results indicate that Kazakhstani identity fosters a sense of belonging regardless of ethnic identity and is widely prevalent despite the country's ethnic diversity. The majority of individuals with Kazakh ethnic identity identify themselves as Kazakhs (76.6%, $n = 258$), while some associate themselves with Kazakhstani identity (13.9%, $n = 47$). Kazakhstani identity is predominantly adopted by individuals of Russian ethnic identity (73.3%, $n = 11$), although a portion still prefers Russian identity (26.7%, $n = 4$). Among Uzbek and Tatar groups, identification with Kazakhstani identity is also high, but there is variation in terms of ethnic identity. Overall, most participants preferred Kazakhstani identity (18.6%, $n = 71$), while Kazakh identity was the most frequently chosen (69.9%, $n = 267$). These results suggest that ethnic diversity in Kazakhstan influences the formation of national identity, and Kazakhstani identity is becoming increasingly widespread regardless of ethnic identity. The historical influence of Soviet-era settlers remains evident among their descendants. These individuals are progressively embracing a Kazakh civic identity while preserving cultural ties to their ethnic heritage. This trend highlights the intricate relationship between ethnic heritage and national affiliation in post-Soviet Kazakhstan.

The study also examines participants' language practices and their attitudes toward the linguistic and cultural changes occurring in Kazakhstan. The majority of respondents (61.0%, $n = 233$) reported using the Kazakh language predominantly in their home and daily communication, while 27.7% ($n = 106$) indicated that they use both Kazakh and Russian, reflecting the

⁵ Bureau of National statistics, Agency for Strategic planning and reforms of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Population data as of November 1, 2024: 20,243,981 people, Women: 10,353,239, Men: 9,890,742. <https://stat.gov.kz/> (accessed December 21, 2024).

bilingual nature of the population. A smaller group (6.5%, $n = 25$) primarily spoke Russian, while 4.7% ($n = 18$) communicated in other languages, highlighting Kazakhstan's ethnic and linguistic diversity.

Regarding frequency, 86.6% ($n = 331$) of participants stated that they use Kazakh daily, reinforcing its significance in everyday life. Another 6.3% ($n = 24$) reported using it several times a week, while 6.3% ($n = 24$) used it occasionally as needed. Only 0.8% ($n = 3$) of respondents indicated that they never use the Kazakh language, demonstrating its broad acceptance and importance in Kazakhstani society.

Overall, the findings of this study provide valuable insights into the relationship between cultural policy and the formation of national identity in Kazakhstan, shedding light on how these policies influence public perceptions of ethnic and civic identity in the context of ongoing linguistic and cultural transformations.

The study also examined public opinion regarding the Kazakhstani government's decision to transition from Cyrillic to Latin script. The results indicate that 48.4% ($n = 185$) of participants support this linguistic reform, emphasizing its perceived benefits for national identity and international integration. However, 30.9% ($n = 118$) of respondents expressed disagreement, citing concerns or reservations about the change. Additionally, 20.7% ($n = 79$) of participants stated that they had no opinion, reflecting a segment of the population that may be indifferent or uninformed about the implications of the transition.

The study further explored regional differences in attitudes toward the transition, gender perspectives on the reforms, participation in cultural events, and the significance of Kazakhstani identity. A detailed analysis of these factors provides a clearer understanding of public sentiment toward the script change.

Support for the transition to the Latin script varied across different regions of Kazakhstan. The highest level of support was recorded in Astana, where 24.9% ($n = 46$) of respondents favored the transition. Support was slightly lower in other cities: 21.1% ($n = 39$) in Semey, 20.5% ($n = 38$) in Shymkent, 17.3% ($n = 32$) in Almaty, and 16.2% ($n = 30$) in Aktau. Opposition was more pronounced in Almaty (27.1%, $n = 32$) and Semey (21.2%, $n = 25$), while the highest proportion of undecided respondents was recorded in Aktau (27.8%, $n = 22$).

When examining gender differences, support for the Latin script transition was relatively evenly distributed: 48.1% ($n = 89$) of women and 51.9% ($n = 96$) of men expressed approval. Opposition was slightly higher among women (52.5%, $n = 62$) compared to men (47.5%, $n = 56$), while the proportion of undecided respondents was nearly identical for both genders.

Regarding participation in cultural events related to Kazakh culture and traditions, 12.0% ($n = 46$) of participants reported attending such events very frequently, while 35.3% ($n = 135$) attended them often, indicating strong engagement in cultural practices. Meanwhile, 16.8% ($n = 64$) participated occasionally, and 29.3% ($n = 112$) attended rarely. Only 6.5% ($n = 25$) indicated that they almost never attended cultural events. These results suggest that nearly

half of the respondents are actively involved in cultural activities, reflecting a deep connection to Kazakh cultural heritage.

The survey also examined the significance of belonging to the Kazakhstani nation. When asked about the meaning of being Kazakhstani, 52.6% (n = 201) of participants defined it as a combination of factors, including a sense of national belonging, shared values and traditions, respect for culture and language, as well as identification with the state and its history. A smaller proportion, 29.6% (n = 113), highlighted national belonging and shared traditions as the most important elements, while 11.8% (n = 45) emphasized respect for cultural diversity and inclusivity. Only 6.0% (n = 23) of participants primarily identified with the state and its historical heritage.

Further analysis revealed gender differences in perceptions of Kazakhstani identity. Women were more likely to emphasize ethnic traditions and shared values: 19.4% of women considered these key elements of Kazakhstani identity, compared to 10.2% of men. This difference is statistically significant, as indicated by the standardized residual score of 2.3 for women and -2.3 for men. Men, on the other hand, were more likely to adopt a comprehensive view of Kazakhstani identity: 31.7% selected "All of the above," compared to 20.9% of women. This difference is also confirmed by standardized residuals of 2.1 for men and -2.1 for women. Other aspects, such as identification with the state and its historical heritage (6.0%) and respect for the culture and language of the host country's citizens (11.8%), revealed only minor gender differences.

These results suggest that women tend to emphasize cultural and traditional values as central elements of Kazakhstani identity, while men are more inclined to adopt a broader, integrative concept of national identity. This gender divergence highlights different perspectives on how national identity is constructed within the evolving cultural landscape of Kazakhstan.

Participants proposed several recommendations for strengthening Kazakhstani national identity, with three key suggestions standing out. The most frequently proposed measure, chosen by 38.2% (n = 146) of respondents, was the improvement of Kazakh-language education, underscoring the importance of language as a cornerstone of national identity.

A significant portion of participants, 23.6% (n = 90), emphasized the importance of preserving and promoting Kazakh culture and traditions, reflecting a desire to safeguard and celebrate cultural heritage as a unifying factor for Kazakhstanis. Additionally, 12.8% (n = 49) of participants stressed the need for a structured state strategy on national identity, suggesting that a government-led approach could contribute to the development of a cohesive national identity.

Among other suggestions were economic support (9.7%, n = 37), ensuring equal opportunities for all nationalities (5.2%, n = 20), encouraging interethnic dialogue and tolerance (3.7%, n = 14), and emphasizing legal protection of minority rights (0.8%, n = 3). A small group, 6.0% (n = 23), expressed uncertainty about the best measures to recommend.

These results highlight the crucial role of education, cultural heritage preservation, and strategic planning in shaping a strong and inclusive Kazakhstani national identity. Gender differences in perceptions emphasize the need for policies that account for diverse perspectives within society, while the recommendations provide concrete pathways for policymakers to promote unity and pride among Kazakhstani citizens.

The first hypothesis, which posits that the influence of the Soviet Union on language and education in Kazakhstan persists, was examined through participants' linguistic practices. The majority of respondents (61.0%, $n = 233$) reported speaking exclusively in Kazakh in their daily lives, while 27.7% ($n = 106$) indicated bilingual use, being proficient in both Kazakh and Russian. A smaller portion, 6.5% ($n = 25$), used only Russian, while 4.7% ($n = 18$) spoke other languages. These results highlight the enduring significance of the Russian language in Kazakhstan, particularly as a secondary language for official and interpersonal communication. The prevalence of bilingualism, observed in 27.7% ($n = 106$) of participants, reflects the legacy of Soviet-era policies that institutionalized Russian in governance, education, and public life.

The continued use of Russian alongside Kazakh by a significant portion of the population supports the hypothesis that Russian still holds the status of a second official language. This bilingual structure suggests that while Kazakh is becoming increasingly dominant in daily life, Russian continues to play a crucial role in communication, particularly in urban areas and among the older generation. The bilingual population represents a transitional phase, indicating either a strategy for linguistic coexistence or a gradual shift toward full linguistic independence.

The second hypothesis, which suggests that the Soviet legacy continues to influence Kazakhstan's national identity and cultural values, was examined through participants' engagement in cultural events. A significant portion of participants frequently attends cultural events related to Kazakh culture and traditions, while others attend less frequently or occasionally. Approximately half of the population actively participates in these events, contributing to the development of Kazakh culture, whereas the other half does not engage in them regularly. This indicates that many Kazakhstani citizens have not fully adapted to these cultural practices. These results suggest that despite the Soviet Union's efforts to establish a distinct identity, a strong connection to Kazakh cultural heritage remains, although levels of public engagement vary. The persistent influence of Soviet cultural structures appears to coexist with the revival of national identity markers, highlighting the complex interplay between historical and contemporary cultural influences in Kazakhstan's evolving national consciousness. The persistent influence of Soviet cultural structures appears to coexist with the revival of national identity markers, highlighting the complex interplay between historical and contemporary cultural influences in Kazakhstan's evolving national consciousness, and revealing a clear divide in how citizens engage with Kazakh cultural practices.

Despite this, the active participation of nearly half the population in cultural events suggests that efforts to revive and strengthen Kazakhstani

cultural identity are ongoing. These efforts may stem from state-led policies or grassroots movements aimed at reconnecting citizens with their heritage.

Regarding ethnic groups attitudes toward Kazakh culture, language, and script, the study confirms substantial differences based on nationality. Ethnic Kazakhs primarily identify with their ethnic background, with 76.6% identifying primarily as "Kazakhs," while a smaller proportion (13.9%) identifies as "Kazakhstanis," indicating some connection to a broader national identity. This reflects the state's emphasis on the Kazakh language, traditions and identity as foundational elements of national culture. Ethnic Russians, on the other hand, exhibit a stronger affiliation with national-state identity, with 73.3% identifying as "Kazakhstanis" and 26.7% as "Russians." This suggests that while ethnic Russians are integrated into Kazakhstan's civic sphere, they continue to maintain their ethnic heritage, highlighting a balance between cultural distinctiveness and national belonging.

Ethnic Uzbeks, 62.5% of whom identify as 'Kazakhstanis,' prioritize national-state identity, suggesting strong assimilation and acceptance of civic national identity. This trend may be influenced by shared cultural and linguistic similarities with Kazakhs. Smaller ethnic groups, such as Tatars, exhibit more mixed identification patterns, with 25% identifying as 'other,' potentially reflecting a distinct cultural heritage or a weaker alignment with dominant national narratives. These differences highlight the complexity of national identity in Kazakhstan, where ethnic, cultural, and civic identities intersect in diverse ways.

The findings confirm that attitudes toward Kazakh culture, language, and identity vary significantly across ethnic groups. While ethnic Kazakhs prioritize their ethnic identity, ethnic Russians and Uzbeks demonstrate a stronger connection to civic identity. These patterns reflect Kazakhstan's multicultural society and illustrate the ongoing negotiations over identity among its diverse population. The intricate interplay between ethnicity, culture, and national identity in Kazakhstan shapes attitudes toward Kazakh culture and language, ultimately influencing the broader process of national identity formation.

An analysis of survey responses revealed significant differences in cultural, linguistic, and national identity preferences among Kazakhstan's various ethnic groups. These trends highlight the diverse ways in which ethnic communities in the country engage with their cultural heritage, language, and national identity.

Regarding language use, ethnic groups in Kazakhstan generally prefer speaking their native languages, though their engagement with Kazakh as the state language varies. Among ethnic Kazakhs, 68.5% use Kazakh in their daily lives, whereas only 3% of ethnic Russians do so regularly. For ethnic Russians, Russian remains the dominant language, with 33.3% using it exclusively in everyday communication. Uzbeks, Tatars, and other ethnic groups demonstrate a more balanced distribution between Kazakh and Russian, reflecting a bilingual approach to daily interactions. Notably, groups such as Uzbeks (75%) and others (40%) predominantly use their native languages, particularly Uzbek,

emphasizing a strong preference for preserving ethnic languages alongside the state language.

In terms of the frequency of Kazakh language use in daily life, ethnic Kazakhs exhibit the highest level of usage (92.3%), indicating a strong connection to the state language. In contrast, only 13.3% of ethnic Russians regularly use Kazakh, while 53.3% use it only when necessary. Uzbeks and Tatars demonstrate more frequent use of Kazakh compared to Russians, though not as consistently as Kazakhs, suggesting that non-titular groups, particularly Russians, prefer to use Kazakh less frequently.

Attitudes toward the transition to the Latin alphabet reveal stark differences between ethnic groups. Ethnic Kazakhs and Uzbeks show considerable support for the transition, with 49.9% of Kazakhs and 56.3% of Uzbeks in favor. However, ethnic Russians display significant resistance, with 60% opposing the shift to the Latin script. This resistance among ethnic Russians reflects a broader reluctance to accept changes in Kazakhstan's linguistic landscape, which are perceived as markers of national identity transformation.

Participation in cultural events related to Kazakh traditions also varies significantly across ethnic groups. Ethnic Kazakhs are the most active, with 36.5% frequently attending cultural events and 12.5% attending very often. In contrast, ethnic Russians show much lower participation, with 20% rarely attending and 5.3% never attending such events. Non-Kazakh ethnic groups, such as Tatars and Uzbeks, also participate less actively, with particularly low engagement among Tatars, where 75% report infrequent participation. This low level of involvement suggests that non-Kazakh ethnic groups, especially Russians, are less engaged in Kazakh cultural events, further highlighting the gap in cultural interaction.

When answering the question about national identity, ethnic Kazakhs most closely associate their sense of belonging with shared values and traditions, with 31.8% identifying themselves as part of the nation. Ethnic Russians, however, more often define their Kazakhstani identity through respect for the culture and language of their new home, with 46.7% emphasizing this aspect. This divergence highlights that the sense of Kazakhstani identity among ethnic Russians is more state- and history-oriented rather than deeply connected to Kazakh cultural ties.

Finally, when examining opinions on how to strengthen Kazakhstani national identity, a significant portion of Kazakhstanis support improving education in the Kazakh language, with 40.7% of respondents in favor — making it the most commonly selected option. However, only 6.7% of ethnic Russians support this measure. In contrast, ethnic Russians more frequently advocate for initiatives aimed at fostering interethnic dialogue (26.7%) and ensuring equal opportunities for different nationalities (26.7%). A significant portion of Russian respondents (26.7%) remain uncertain about how to strengthen national identity, further indicating a lack of engagement with initiatives promoting Kazakh-language education and cultural integration.

These findings demonstrate that ethnic groups in Kazakhstan perceive

their national and cultural identity differently, with ethnic Kazakhs maintaining a closer connection to the Kazakh language and cultural events. Ethnic Russians, on the other hand, prioritize their own language and traditions, showing less enthusiasm for the transition to the Latin alphabet and lower participation in Kazakh cultural life. The results highlight the complexity of national identity formation in Kazakhstan, emphasizing the need for policies that address these differences and promote greater inclusivity among ethnic groups.

4 CONCLUSION

This study examines the cultural, linguistic, and national identity preferences of various ethnic groups in Kazakhstan, shedding light on the country's multicultural composition and the long-term impact of the post-Soviet era. The findings indicate that ethnic Kazakhs exhibit a strong attachment to the Kazakh language and cultural events, whereas ethnic Russians tend to maintain a closer connection to their own language and traditions. Ethnic Russians demonstrate lower participation in Kazakh cultural life and show significant resistance to the transition of the Kazakh language to the Latin alphabet. These results suggest that Kazakhstan's national identity remains in a transitional phase, with the legacy of the Soviet period continuing to influence its formation.

Regarding language use, ethnic Kazakhs report the highest level of daily use of the Kazakh language, while ethnic Russians and other ethnic groups use it to a lesser extent. This pattern highlights the close relationship between linguistic preferences and cultural identity. Additionally, the study reveals significant differences in how various ethnic groups perceive national identity. Ethnic Kazakhs emphasize their ethnic identity, whereas ethnic Russians and other groups tend to align more with a civic identity, reflecting their attachment to the state and its history rather than cultural or traditional ties.

The findings suggest that the formation of national identity in Kazakhstan faces challenges due to differences in the attitudes and levels of participation among ethnic groups. However, a key opportunity for the future lies in recognizing ethnic diversity as strength and promoting policies that encourage all groups to engage more deeply with Kazakh culture. Such policies, aimed at expanding participation in linguistic and cultural activities, could foster greater ethnic cohesion and strengthen the sense of national belonging among Kazakhstan's citizens.

In conclusion, ethnic diversity and linguistic differences in Kazakhstan are crucial factors in the processes of national identity formation and cultural integration. Developing policies that take these differences into account will be essential for ensuring the sustainability of Kazakhstan's multicultural society and promoting the equitable participation of all ethnic groups in the country's social and cultural life.

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