

Self-Identification among Kazakh Diaspora in Germany

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Abstract

Transnational migration spaces and a system of diasporas are created and developed in the context of globalisation. The self-identification of an ethnic group in destination is one of the facets of modern human mobility. The development of the Kazakh diasporas in Germany is a vivid example of self-identification. The study aims to examine the mechanism of establishment and development of the Kazakh diaspora in Germany. As part of the analysis of the Kazakh diaspora in Germany, a four-polar identification model was used. The study identifies the main causes and outcomes of the ethnic identification of the Kazakhs in Germany.

Keywords: *Diaspora; migration; Kazakh ethnic group; identification; Germany*

Introduction

Globalisation means borders of states and ethnic groups are blurred to an extent and it does not come free of challenges. Self-identification has become one of these challenges frequently debated at international level. Ethnic self-identification is of critical importance (Bobkov, 2007).

In the last three to four decades, diasporas became more common and the methodology of studying diasporas gained importance (Avdashkin, 2015). The concept of “diaspora” is used to denote the concept of “ethnic minority”, to define groups of migrants living outside their country of origin. It is the diaspora that acts as the guardian of traditional culture and diasporas are shaped by race, culture, religion, politics, and so on. To define the diaspora, such parameters as language, common cultural values, ethnic identification, and the desire to preserve socio-cultural identity are used (Gazdieva, 2014; Malevany et al., 2020).

Analysis and structuring of the mechanism of establishment and development of the Kazakh diaspora in Germany, within the framework of the study of migrants’ ethnic identification process in Europe, allows identifying particular mechanisms and aspects of the process among Kazakh immigrants in Germany. The main denominator of Kazakh ethnicity is language and it determines the degree of ethnic belonging among Kazakhs in destination (Zhaupova and Alishpaeva, 2014).

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The creation and development of transnational migrant spaces and diaspora networks is important to understand (Kochetkov and Kalinkin, 2009). The process of ethnic self-identification is determined by the stages of the migration process and its causes, the history of the diaspora, and the individual characteristics of migrants: ethnicity, professional skills, cultural affiliations and educational attainment level (Mendikulova, 2014a; Shydelko and Kuzo, 2020). At the same time, a key challenge for Muslim migrants in Europe emerged as integration and linguistic and cultural-religious identity. To understand the scale of ethnic identification among Kazakhs in Germany, a four-polar model of assimilation, acculturation, marginality, and dissociation can be used (Kinunen and Gurieva, 2010).

Researchers have identified several phases of migration activity of Kazakhs who moved to Europe: the second half of the 18th century; 19th century; 1960-1990s; and the beginning of the 21st century (Mendikulova, 2014a). The basis of the Kazakh diaspora in Western Europe is represented by immigrants from Kazakhstan, Turkey, and China. Representatives of the Kazakh diaspora mainly inhabit the Western and Eastern parts of Germany. The settlement regions of Germany were defined by the historical stages of development of Turkey, China, Pakistan, and the Soviet Union (Zhaupova and Alishpaeva, 2014).

The Kazakhs in Germany are actively involved in the European reality, maintaining a careful attitude not only to the traditional national culture but also to the culture of the country of residence, contributing to achieving a universal balance of interests. The successful adaptation of Kazakhs in countries of different economic and cultural orientations can be explained by their genetic connection with nomadism, when the degree of adaptability determined the possibilities of survival. The success of adaptation was ensured by social and spatial mobility (Zhaupova and Alishpaeva, 2014).

Cultural heritage objects have played an important role in the development of Kazakhs' ethnic consciousness: monuments of history and art; Kazakh epic; cultural values, which include documents, books, musical instruments, and folk art objects carefully preserved by migrants (Ermekbai, 2017). A number of researchers believe that following the traditions and ideology of the ancestors allows the Kazakh ethnos of Europe to be preserved (Seisen, 2016).

When considering the specific features of the establishment and development of the Kazakh diasporas in Germany, the principles of constructivism, institutionalism, anthropocentrism, and stadiality were applied. According to constructivism, the diaspora is considered a community with external borders and clearly built internal social ties. The principle of anthropocentrism allowed studying individual representatives of the diaspora, determining their motivation and self-identification features in the socio-ethnic community context. Finally, institutionalism defines the diaspora as a social institution, the dynamics of the diaspora's development is considered according to the principle of graduality (Avdashkin, 2015).

We have reviewed studies particularly published by Kazakh, Western, and Russian researchers devoted to globalisation, ethnic identification, diasporas, and sociolinguistic aspect of immigration and integration. In this study, we analyse the mechanism of establishing and developing the Kazakh diaspora in Germany.

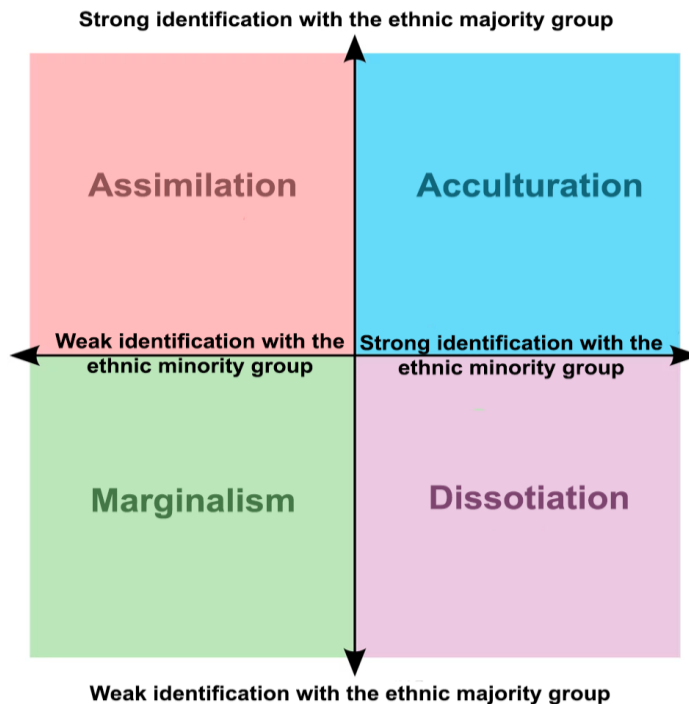


Data and Methods

The formulated problem is analysed in the context of the results of modern research in this field to identify achievements and planned prospects. The methodology of the research was based on the principles of historicism and objectivity. The study of the complex migration process that precedes the creation of a network of diasporas and transnational spaces of migrants is based on the historical and typological method, which, unlike the method of analogies and comparisons, expands the understanding of the problem and allows effectively comprehending and studying it (Kochetkov and Kalinkin, 2009). Within the framework of the conducted research, a system, programme-targeted, complex, and other approaches were used, which allowed organising and conducting the most effective scientific search.

The prerequisites and causes of historical migrations, their interrelation, and main areas were established in the first stage. The factors influencing the establishment and development of the ethnic identity of the individual and society were determined. In the context of migration activity, the processes of creation and functioning of ethnic diasporas are examined. When considering identification, such aspects as assimilation, marginality, acculturation and dissociation were identified and correlated with the adaptation process. Within the framework of the used four-polar model of ethnic identity (Figure 1), developed by Kinunen and Gurieva (2010) the main characteristics of identification are presented.

Figure 1. Four-polar model of ethnic identity



In the process of assimilation, identification with the receiving party is carried out; marginality implies the denial of any ethnic identification, unlike acculturation, which involves two-way identification. The dissociative approach presupposes identification only within an ethnic

group. At the final stage, based on the structured and generalised material in the course of the study, the mechanism of self-identification of the Kazakh diasporas in Germany was analysed.

Discussion

The solution to the problems of globalisation, which have covered all areas of development of modern society, is possible by achieving a universal balance of interests, which is achievable only if each nation realises its national identity (Bobkov, 2007). Identity, along with freedom, survival, and well-being, constitutes the basic human needs; violation of at least one of them leads to violence, alienation, poverty, and repression (Vorkunova, 2019). The level of migration flows is determined by the economic inequality of individual regions, wars, famine, political and economic cataclysms (Kochetkov and Kalinkin, 2009).

Historically Kazakhs' migration have been motivated by a number of social, political and economic reasons related to; the establishment of Soviet power; the civil war; and famine in Kazakhstan; the Second World War; and the collapse of the Soviet Union (Mendikulova, 2014b). The migration of Kazakhs to Western Europe appeared voluntary by character but often involve an inherently forced nature due to political or economic reasons from the 1930s to 1990s.² They could also be conditioned upon the desire to achieve a higher standard of living or personal interests (Mustajoki, 2014a).

It was an extremely complicated situation in Kazakhstan at the beginning of the 1920s, the effects of the Civil war, the agrarian policy of the Soviet government, the famine as a result of the acting taxes and drought of 1921, the reduction of livestock numbers by almost four times, the rise of prices on manufactured goods for 311% led to forced migrations (Kozlov, 2012; Tugai, 2017). After the overthrow in 1919, members of the government of M. Chokai emigrated to Europe (Mendikulova, 2014a). In 1930-1933, famine again claimed the lives of one and a half million people. About a third of the entire Kazakh population died, more than a million people migrated to China, and then to Turkey through India and Pakistan.

The next stage of Kazakh migration is connected with the period of the Second World War. More than 350 thousand people died at the front, thousands were sent to labour and concentration camps (Mendikulova, 2014a). Many researchers believe that during the Second World War, Germany actively used the doctrine of Pan-Turkism, which became one factor that determined the Turkestan Legion's development (Shaimardanova, 2016).

The period of 1960-1990 is largely marked by labour immigration to Western Europe. A significant share of these labour migrants came from Turkey, which was facilitated by economic and political instability, military coups, agrarian overpopulation, rising inflation, and low wages in the country (see Sirkeci, 2000; Sirkeci, 2003). Labour immigration was encouraged by the state, and Turkey's bilateral agreements with the Federal Republic of Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, France, Austria, and Sweden regulated the flow of immigrant workers to Western Europe. Recruitment points were engaged in organising migration, sending immigrants, including Kazakhs, to Cologne, West Berlin, and the cities of the Ruhr Valley. In the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG), 21.7% of the working population were workers from Turkey, conditioned upon the two countries' historical connection and geographical proximity. The majority of immigrants were employed in

² See Sirkeci (2009) and (2006) and Teke Lloyd & Sirkeci (2022) for the conflict model of migration underlining insecurity as a key driver for migration.



industry and construction, the predominant part of which were unskilled workers since the majority of migrants were rural residents, some of whom eventually returned to their homeland (Mendikulova, 2014b).

Kazakh migrants in the 1960s sought to earn money in Germany to pay off government loans in Turkey, raise living standards, invest in real estate and traditional leather production. Over time, Kazakh immigrants involved in the production sector improved their living conditions, abandoned the rural lifestyle, and returned to Turkey. In conditions of limited re-emigration in 1980, more than 100 Kazakh families from Turkey lived in Western Europe, mainly in Germany, where Kazakhs from China, Afghanistan, and Iran also lived. By the end of the 1980s, about 30 thousand migrants were engaged in entrepreneurial activity, constantly improving their social and educational levels. In 1965, a law was enacted that gave immigrants the right to permanent residence after 8 years of residence in Germany. Since 1978, the law applied only to migrants provided with housing conditions and who spoke German (Mendikulova, 2014b).

In the mid-1970s, Germany adopted a number of measures aimed at limiting migration, which reduced the travel of migrants to their homeland. And since the 1980s, the implementation of the “Urgent Measures Programme” – the re-emigration programme began. In the context of the policy aimed at preparing migrants to return to their homeland, activities were carried out to support the ethnic and cultural environment of the donor country. Ethnic societies were organised, ethnic festivals were held, and classes in Turkish were created in schools. The measures taken contributed to consolidating the Kazakh ethnic group and preserving its ethnic identity (Mendikulova, 2014a). Representatives of different cultures preserve and continue to develop fundamental differences regardless of political and economic regimes.

At present, a considerable part of the Kazakhs of Western Europe has small or medium-sized businesses, higher education, and speak foreign languages. Over time, businesses that reflected the ethnic identity of the Kazakhs were formed and developed – enterprises for sewing leather ware and processing leather, cafes and restaurants with Oriental cuisine (Mendikulova, 2014a). Ethnic businesses contributed to preserving the ethnic identity of Kazakh migrants and adapting to new socio-economic conditions. Among successful businesspeople are representatives of the Kazakh diaspora: Kabi Sumer and Fazyl Kaya (Mendikulova, 2014; Féron, 2020).

The next stage of migration is associated with the collapse of the political and economic system of the Soviet Union, socio-economic and political reforms, and a change of ideology. In the 1990s, two stages are identified: 1991–1994; 1995 – early 2000s. Taking advantage of the encouragement of the Kazakh government, 155 thousand Kazakhs returned to Kazakhstan in 1991–1996, but the difficult process of integration aggravated by problems with work and housing ended with the fact that after 1995, every twentieth repatriate left. Economic instability caused the migration of professionals from Kazakhstan (Mendikulova, 2014a).

The fact of migration at each stage of different social groups with different purposes is obvious. In different periods, various groups of people moved from the territory of Kazakhstan. However, the basic concepts for self-determination remained in history, traditional values, language and religion, which are the main elements of every culture or civilisation (Huntington, 2003; Guzhvenko, 2010).

Language is the main indicator of identity and an expression of ethno-cultural identity. The importance of the language is determined officially by its existence, the attitude among the inhabitants of the country, and scientific and practical interest aimed at supporting and preserving immigrant languages. The speech community is the most stable in maintaining the rules and norms of traditional communication. The linguistic picture of the world represents the cultural picture of the world of a certain ethnic group. Each person's linguistic identification represents the process of constant integration and enculturation (Nurutdinova and Panfilova, 2019).

Trilingualism or multilingualism is a feature of the linguistic identification of Kazakhs in Western Europe and is determined by the historical aspects of migration processes. People from Kazakhstan speak Kazakh and Russian, representatives of the Kazakh communities of Turkey – Kazakh and Turkish, China – Kazakh and Chinese, and all of them speak the language of the host country – Germany. The Kazakh language, as a rule, is not much needed among the representatives of the second and third generation of the Kazakh diaspora and is rarely used. Kazakhs use Turkish in their families, and children use German. Among the many immigrant languages in Germany, Turkish is the most common – 2.4%. There are schools in many regions where teaching is in Turkish (Mustajoki, 2014b). The problem of the vitality of the Kazakh language, which determines the intensity of its use in various spheres of life, affects the establishment and development of ethnic consciousness and self-consciousness (Zhaupova and Alishpaeva, 2014; Bratasyuk and Shevchuk, 2022). The severe second language problem that causes adaptation difficulties is related to using different alphabets. Kazakhs from Kazakhstan use the Cyrillic alphabet, Turkey use the Latin alphabet, and China use the Arabic script (Mendikulova, 2014b; Seisen, 2016).

As a result of the ethnic self-identification process, migration led to the development of diasporas – ethnic communities with common ideas about the historical homeland, culture, and traditions (Language, culture, Diaspora..., 2014). The key indicator of diasporic affiliation, when the very concept of “diaspora” means an ethnically foreign society, has always had ties with the country of origin (Kochetkov and Kalinkin, 2009; Avdashkin, 2015).

The diaspora can lead a closed lifestyle, preserving its traditions and not integrating into the host country's culture. There is a possible option of full adaptation to someone else's culture to the detriment of their language and culture. But the successful integration with the preservation of traditional culture deserves special attention (Gazdieva, 2014). The Kazakh diaspora is a clear example of mutual integration – it is a historically formed community with certain ethno-cultural traditions based on ethnic traditions and the interaction of cultures and languages of the host country and the country of origin (Kochetkov and Kalinkin, 2009). The history of creation and the social policy of the host country is the basis for creating Kazakh diasporas with different statuses and cultural environments, but the problem of learning the native language and traditional national culture remains a common urgent problem. The preservation of ethnic identity among Kazakh diasporas is connected with family, language, customs, and traditions (Seisen, 2016).

A distinctive feature of the Kazakh diasporas is the tendency to adapt to a new social reality, to acquire a new culture, norms, and values (Seisen, 2016). Numerous researchers suggest that the successful adaptation of Kazakhs in all regions of the world is a consequence of belonging to a nomadic civilisation (Zhaupova and Alishpaeva, 2014). Nevertheless, they always act as an ethnic minority that has no real political weight in the country of residence.



In the process of cultural adaptation, the choice of individual behavioural strategies depended on the choice of priority: ethnic identity or a new culture. The position is determined by age, gender, education, religion, status, language. Mobile young generations of migrants were attracted to an assimilative strategy, identifying themselves with the country of residence. Acculturation or integration is largely characteristic of young and older generations who have received education, organised their business, and identified themselves simultaneously with the Kazakh ethnic group and with Germany, where they have achieved success and status. A dissociative position or separation strategy is characteristic of older generations who identified themselves only with an ethnic group. The strategy of marginality, denial of social groups is not typical for Kazakhs (Kinunen and Gurieva, 2010).

Thus, Kazakhs as labour migrants from Turkey appeared in Germany in the mid-1960s. But back in 1929-1939, M. Chokai opened the press organ of the Turkestan National Committee in Berlin, which was managing the underground struggle against the USSR, “Yash Turkestan” (Young Turkestan) (Mendikulova, 2014b). During the Second World War, the Turkestan Legion was created in Berlin, consisting mainly of Uzbeks and Kazakhs. In the second half of the 20th century, Kazakhs successfully work both in production and in the socio-political sphere, cooperating with the radio station “Svoboda”. The editorial office of the radio station broadcasting to Kazakhstan was headed by Hasen Oraltai, the son of Kalibek Hakim – a fighter against the Chinese Communists.

The territory of West Germany is inhabited by Kazakhs who migrated from Turkey, China, Pakistan, and the east was settled by immigrants from the post-Soviet space (Zhaupova and Alishpaeva, 2014; Kranz, 2020). In the 1990s, about a thousand Kazakhs lived in Germany. Two communities have been established in Munich and Cologne to work with young people, whose activities are rather inert due to the lack of premises and work experience. Since 1993, the “Bulletin of the Kazakh Turks of Europe” has been published in Munich, the materials of which are devoted to the life of Kazakh communities abroad and events in Kazakhstan. Notably, the first issue was published in Turkish and the second one was published only in Kazakh. The Kazakh diaspora in Germany is characterised by strong linguistic and ethnic identity indicators and considers it necessary to constantly maintain ties with Kazakhstan (Zhaupova and Alishpaeva, 2014).

Each diaspora was formed under the influence of a large number of factors, integrated into society while making considerable efforts to preserve its national identity. According to surveys, 99.9% of representatives of the Kazakh diaspora consider ethnic consciousness and self-awareness to be the main cultural value (Zhaupova and Alishpaeva, 2014).

Due to the efforts of the first generations of immigrants, the Kazakhs of Germany are distinguished by a high social status and educational level. Family relations of Kazakhs in Germany are more conservative than in other European countries. Mono-ethnic marriages are common. The older generation opposes interethnic unions but the younger generation already tends towards polyethnic marriages (Mendikulova, 2014b). In 2005, Germany had the largest number of Kazakh families, natives of Turkey – 250.

The successful adaptation of Kazakhs in countries of different economic and cultural orientations is explained by their genetic connection with nomadism when the degree of adaptability determined the possibilities of survival. The success of adaptation was ensured by social and spatial mobility (Zhaupova and Alishpaeva, 2014).

Adaptation in a foreign language environment inevitably leads to the assimilation of young generations with high social mobility. In these conditions, the diaspora acts as the guardian of traditional culture, attaching great importance to the preservation of language as a factor determining ethnic identity. However, despite all the efforts made by the settlers among the younger generations and even in families, the language is losing its vitality. Therewith, 31% of representatives of the Kazakh diaspora in Germany consider Kazakh as their native language, 29% – Turkish, and 28% – German. 43.5% understand the Kazakh language and can use it, 56.5% understand the Kazakh language but do not speak it. Almost all representatives of the diaspora agree that Kazakhs should know their native language – 99.9%. Notably, the vitality of the Kazakh language is higher among representatives of the diaspora of West Germany, representatives of the diaspora of East Germany identify themselves not by language but by national characteristics. In addition, the following components of ethnic self-identification are also identified as the main ones: national consciousness and self-awareness – 95%, observance of folk traditions – 88%, adherence to ancestral religion – 49%, national cuisine – 30%, territorial unity – 10%. The data characterising changes in traditions in the existing conditions are of particular interest, 61.5% confirmed the fact of the preservation of family rituals and customs, 34.9% stated their change (Zhaupova and Alishpaeva, 2014).

General cultural events are held to preserve national traditions and strengthen traditional culture and language. But there remains a serious problem associated with learning the language through different alphabets. Turkish Kazakhs suggest switching to the Latin alphabet. To strengthen ties with the historical homeland, it is proposed to create a coordinating council for workers abroad, a children's television programme in Kazakh, invite a Kazakh language teacher from Kazakhstan for children (Mendikulova, 2014a). A study of the activities of the cultural centre in Cologne showed an acute shortage of literature in the Kazakh language, which does not come from Kazakhstan (Zhaupova and Alishpaeva, 2014).

In 2008, the national cultural centre of the Kazakhs in Germany, along with the centres of other 10 European states, joined a single confederation (Mendikulova, 2014a). Nevertheless, there is no communication between representatives of the Kazakh diaspora in Germany who immigrated from different countries: Kazakhstan, Turkey, China, Pakistan, Iran, India, Russia. Living on the territory of different states and adapting to existing conditions have formed a number of differences even in traditional household culture. For example, beshbarmak can be traditionally cooked with dough or rice instead of dough (Zhaupova and Alishpaeva, 2014).

In the process of working on the project “Kazakh diaspora in Europe: Great Britain, Germany, Finland, Poland” in 2007, many field studies of Kazakhs in Germany were conducted. When visiting families, the following features were noted: a high degree of hospitality, the main dish of Kazakh cuisine for guests – beshbarmak, the flag of the Republic of Kazakhstan among the modern furnishings that can be decorated in the national style, national dishes, tablecloths and paintings with national ornaments, dombra, a yurt model are presented. Clothing also carries elements of traditional culture. The older generation is well acquainted with oral folk art, the younger ones confidently perform karazhorga and kamazhai, play baiga, kokpar, and other national games (Zhaupova and Alishpaeva, 2014).

The preservation of historical memory and cultural heritage objects is the basis for the preservation and development of basic concepts of ethnic identity. The inclusion of German Kazakhs in the traditional national culture is organically complemented by the process of assimilation to European reality, adaptation to a foreign language environment. Thus,



Kazakhs' awareness of their national identity is important for achieving a universal balance of interests.

Conclusions

Determining the main causes and mechanisms of migration of Kazakhs in the 20th century, and their geographical trajectory allowed unveiling a number of trends in the process of settlement in Germany and the further development of Kazakh diasporas. The most active stages of resettlement are associated with the political and economic crises of the periods of Soviet power establishment, the Second World War, and the collapse of the Soviet Union. Migrations of the first wave of the 1920s are associated with resettlement in the territory of China, Turkey, Afghanistan, and Iran. Due to objective circumstances, the subsequent migrations during World War II were already directed toward Europe. The third stage of the 1960s-1990s, labour immigration was also targeting Europe.

The process of development of the Kazakh diaspora in Germany is closely related to ethnic self-identification. Knowledge of the Kazakh language, the growth of ethnic business, the activities of ethnic societies, and ethnic festivals contributed to the consolidation of the Kazakh ethnic group and the preservation of its ethnic identity. Identification is accompanied by an active integration process, in which all representatives of the Kazakh ethnic group are involved, constantly improving their social and educational levels. These are rural residents involved in the production, small and medium-sized business people, and young people who have received higher education. At present, Germany is home to the largest Kazakh diaspora in Europe. The Kazakh diaspora in Germany is characterised by strong indicators of linguistic and ethnic belonging and successful adaptation.

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