

Abstract

Inner-state conflicts arising from cultural, ethnic, linguistic and other differences started appearing after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. Kazakhstan, being one of the main recipients of the Slavic diaspora in Soviet times encountered the problems of interethnic distrust and alienation after 1991. Despite the fact the Kazakhstani government had announced as its main priority the construction of a civic nation and of the feeling of belonging to one state, it strongly supported Kazakh self-consciousness, which led to several consequences, one of which was intensive emigration of the Slavic population. It has resulted in demographic, socio-economic and interethnic tensions. Despite the fact these were studied to some extent, no comprehensive approach has been taken to analyze these issues.

Therefore, this research paper aims to answer the question of how the Kazakhstani nation-building policy influenced the relations between Kazakhs and Russians. Given that the instilling of the national idea can be achieved through many institutions this research focuses on the historical narratives in school and university textbooks; administrative regulations and legislative systems, and their implications for each ethnic group; plus their implementation in the symbolic realm of the cities, which includes renaming of streets, removal of monuments, and museums.

The results of this research show that the reasons for the emigration of the Slavic population and the general deterioration of interethnic relations in the country were the results of nation-building policy implementation. Firstly, the object of the Kazakhstani historiography was and still is the history of the Kazakh ethnicity, leaving other nations without a 'past'. Secondly, a closer analysis of the state legislative system shows that the government supported Kazakh self-consciousness by dividing people into titular and non-titular nations, and then gave linguistic and legal privileges to the Kazakhs. Analysis of the sociological surveys and interviews that have been conducted present the Slavic populations discontent with this situation. Finally, and despite the fact the government actively supported the revival of Kazakh self-consciousness in the 1990s in different spheres; the findings show that it did not force the process of total elimination of the Soviet legacy in the urban realm, especially in the north-east, because of the threat of separatist movements.

Keywords: Post-Soviet Kazakhstan, Nation-Building, Interethnic Relations.