Social Distance of Ethnic Groups: from Proximity to Remoteness (in the Example of Kazakhstan)

TALGAT KALIYEV
PhD in Political Science, Director of the Institute
of Applied Ethnopolitical Research (Kazakhstan)
talgat.kaliyev@gmail.com

DANA ASHIMKHANOVA
PhD in Sociology, Deputy Director of the Institute
of Applied Ethnopolitical Research (Kazakhstan)
dana.80@mail.ru
ORCID NO: 0009-0002-4949-7962

FARIDA MUSSATAYEVA
Chief Manager of the Institute of Applied
Ethnopolitical Research (Kazakhstan)
f.mussatayeva@mail.ru
ORCID NO: 0000-0003-1326-2141

ABSTRACT. *The ethno-demographic structure of the population of Kazakhstan is characterized by a high degree of ethno-cultural diversity. In the historical retrospective, the analysis of the conflicts involving ethnic groups allows us to discuss the presence of certain social distances that find their expression with categories such as connection and solidarity, remoteness, and intolerance. Over the years of independence, the country has experienced more than 20 intergroup conflicts related to the interethnic sphere. The causes of similar incidents can be attributed to various factors. The main ones are economic inequality, geopolitical instability, cultural gap, stereotypical representation, etc.*

The above-mentioned factors, especially stereotypes and prejudice, can be a potential cause-and-effect link in the relationship formation of various degrees of proximity. In this regard, it is worth drawing clear parallels between interethnic attitudes and social distance, which requires a sociological measurement of their interrelation in Kazakh society.

The article represents a systematization of manifestation characteristics of the social distance in the context of interaction between ethnic groups across different regions. The proposed work represents one of the initial attempts in the Kazakh ethno-political literature to study the processes of interethnic relations within the framework of the assessment proximity: from readiness for interethnic marriages to the desire for ethnic isolation.

KEYWORDS: *nation-building, interethnic relations, ethnic groups, social distance, stereotypical representation, prejudice.*

INTRODUCTION

The Marxist ideology of the 20s of the last century denying the ethnic nature of humanity, assumed the complete alignment and erasure of social boundaries between representatives of ethnic communities. However, historical events of the second half of the last century made their adjustments and led to a resurgence of ethnic self-awareness among the indigenous population of the newly formed states. Is it possible to find a

connection and balance between the growth of ethnic identity and tolerance in interethnic interaction? How to find the connection between ethnic identity and intercultural harmony in the multicultural Kazakh society? The answers to these questions should be sought in the development of "cultural integration", which demonstrates "logical, emotional or aesthetic coherence between cultural values"; as the correspondence between cultural norms and the actual behavior of culture speakers; as the functional interdependence between various elements of culture (S.Y.Levit, 1998, p. 251). At the same time, in cultural understanding "integration" is understood as the "expression of the coherence and interdependence between the elements of the system, ensuring the internal unity of the system, its preservation, harmonious functioning, stability and steadiness" (A.Y.Levit, 1997, p. 148-149).

RESEARCH METHODS

To confirm or refute the proposed hypotheses, the authors used an integral scale of ethnic distancing based on Emory Bogardus's method of data analysis. The integral scale was calculated on the results of quantitative data obtained from the implementation of a sociological study. For further interpretation of the data, the authors have developed criteria for the degree of proximity and remoteness of ethnic groups by eight differentiated intervals. Conclusions are based on a causal analysis of quantitative and qualitative data (in-depth interviews), as well as discourse analysis.

THE RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH

The main components of cultural integration are a common language, a common system of values, norms of behavior, historical memory, the idea of the native land, and common ancestors. In Kazakhstan's realities, all the main components are relevant in daily life as well as in interethnic interactions. However, the language factor resulting from the introduction of a "dual model" built to support the cultural and language interests of Kazakhs and Russians, has become a cause of permanent negative discourses formation. Based on the historical background, the Russian language throughout the post-Soviet region, including Kazakhstan, has been and remains the language of interethnic communication, serving for comfortable mutual understanding and the arrangement of public life. According to the native ethnographer R. Kadyrzhanov, the existent "dual model" has led to the emergence of two language camps – Kazakh-speaking and Russian-speaking audiences (Kadyrzhanov, 2020, p. 12).

It is known that the Kazakh language belongs to the family of Turkic languages, as well as Kyrgyz, Uzbek, Uighur, Azerbaijani, Tatar, and Bashkir languages, whose native speakers live in Kazakhstan. Despite the linguistic kinship and similarities of cultural traditions, the Kazakh language did not become the language of interethnic communication among Turkic-speaking ethnic groups. Throughout the Soviet era, all peoples followed the rules of national (native ethnic) – Russian bilingualism and gradually turned into homo sovieticus (Tyszka, 2009). Nevertheless, thanks to their numerical strength, the indigenous ethnic groups of Central Asia (hereinafter CA) managed to maintain the dominant position of their native language in the territorial area of residence. Conversely, the Kazakhs, due to their small numbers, have experienced the process of Russification and a deep immersion in the Russian cultural and everyday sphere. According to R. Kadyrzhanov, Kazakhs even after independence remain the largest non-Slavic Russian-speaking nation along with Belarus and Ukraine (Kadyrzhanov, 2020, p. 8). Besides, the propaganda concept of the 1930s about the "elder brother", exposing Russians as the "great people" and "first among equals", imposed an

alien imitation image in the minds of Kazakhs (Cheshko, 2000). The mythologeme of the "younger brother" (ethnic groups of CA), his helplessness without the care of the elder Russian people, laid the ethno-psychological complex of insolvency among the Kazakhs as a separate ethnic group (Abdigali & Ahmedzhanov, 2007). In this regard, the first hypothesis should be deduced: due to cultural, linguistic, and historical belonging and inseparability, Kazakhs perceive Russians as the closest in terms of ethno-social distance. The Kazakh-Russian relationship can demonstrate a mirrored closeness and interconnection, up to the readiness for interethnic marriages.

After independence and demarcation of borders, along with ethno-demographic diversity, the historical stamp of the "elder brother" has once again been reactivated in the behavioral and mental model of the Kazakhs. This has found expression in the following practices. Firstly, some Kazakhs with national patriotic sentiments started to express a desire for pronounced dominance in ethnic and linguistic issues, which expressed among other things, in provocative actions with radical elements (language patrols, conflicts involving ethnic groups). Secondly, such excesses in public discourses were interpreted as confrontation with separatist movements (the Uighur question, the Russian world) and justified by false patriotism. Thirdly, geopolitical instability and regeneration of national self-identity among the Kazakhs have engendered a fear of blurring ethnic identity, the absorption by other civilizational challenges. Fourthly, the high socio-cultural consolidation of ethnic groups, the monopolization of the market economy, and their compact settlement in the southern regions of the country have been and remain triggers of ethnic conflicts. For this reason, the second hypothesis of the research may relate to the existing long ethno-social distance of Kazakhs concerning Turkic-speaking (Uighurs, Uzbeks, Azerbaijanis) ethnic groups other than Russians, due to the traumatic "young brother" complex and the desire to become the "elder brother" for others.

The above two hypotheses became the starting point for defining the content and results that will be obtained in the course of the conducted research. The hypotheses were tested using the scientific socio-metric tools of social psychology and conflictology – the Emory Bogardus scale of social distance.

DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

In the 1920s-1930s American sociologists such as E. Bogardus, L. Thurstone, E. Chein, J. Moreno, R. Liker, and others were the first to engage in measuring social-psychological relationships, intergroup and interpersonal attitudes (Tusini, 2022). As an empirical basis for studying intergroup interactions, personal documents, socio-metric methods, and cognitive-behavioral psychotherapies were used. The most widespread and popular method of measuring attitudes was the "social distance scale" (hereinafter – the Scale), developed by Emory Bogardus (Mather, Jones, & Moats, 2017). The concept of social distance has been developed to improve understanding of the processes of acceptance and remoteness between groups of people belonging to different groups and regularly encountering each other. Bogardus used the scale to measure and compare Americans' attitudes towards specific ethnic groups.

According to the Scale calculation method, the distance range consists of seven cumulative judgments that correspond to the permissible closeness of representatives of ethnic groups with members of a given group. The statement number on the scale reflects the magnitude of social distance (1 – minimal, 7 – maximal). Accordingly, the lower this value, the shorter the social distance between two groups and the stronger the

positive feelings of one group towards the other. Conversely, the increase in the indicator is interpreted as a manifestation of ethnic intolerance.

Ranking the degrees of acceptability for close/remote relationships between representatives of eleven ethnic groups looks as follows:
1. as close relatives (spouses)
2. as friends
3. as neighbors
4. as colleague
5. as citizens of my country
6. Only as tourists in my country
7. I would not want to see them in my country.

THE CALCULATING FORMULA OF THE BOGARDUS SCALE:

F = ((n1*1) + (n2*2) … + (n7*7)) /100

n – Answers options (judgments: like close relatives or friends, etc.)

The numerical value of the integral scale of ethnic distancing based on the nature of responses allows interpretation of the magnitude of the proximity or remoteness between ethnic groups following eight differentiated intervals (Table 1). In the integral scale, the ranked interval "as close relatives (spouses)" was divided into "spouses" and "relatives", as the classification of these relationships lies in different planes (levels) of perception. In Kazakhstan, the largest part of citizens can positively relate to interethnic marriages among relatives, but without a personal manifestation of readiness for such an alliance.

Table 1. *Table 3. Interpretation of the degree of proximity or remoteness of ethnic groups according to eight differentiated intervals*

Score intervals	Range of settings	Interpretation
1 – 1,5	Spouses	"Ethnic assimilation" – the expression of readiness to create a family hearth with the assimilation of different ethnic groups representatives of a different cultural and linguistic environment. This social attitude should be interpreted from the position of "we are the same".
1,51 – 2,0	Relatives	"Interethnic integration" – can be regarded as an indicator of a certain level of readiness for rapprochement, the formation of an integral system of cultural and everyday norms. In the paradigm of social distancing, this meaning is interpreted, as "we are one".
2,1 – 2,50	Friends	"Ethnic openness" means a certain degree of openness to direct friendly contacts: the presence of common interests, mutual understanding, trust, and support. Interethnic relations are perceived as "one's own among us".
2,51 – 3,0	Neighbors	"Ethnic solidarity" – an indicator of the degree of striving to preserve ethnic identity by separating the economy with the consolidation of territorial borders. The ability to provide mutual assistance and mutual aid with the perception of another ethnic group as "not quite their own, but not strangers either".

3,1 – 3,5	Colleagues	"Ethnic isolation" – the ability to develop market relations and mutual labor assistance. It involves rare contact with representatives of ethnic groups, tolerance, and willingness to cooperate in certain types of activities to perform certain tasks. It should be perceived as "neither your own nor someone else's".
3,51 – 4,0	Fellow citizens (compatriots)	"Ethnic neutrality" – an illustration of the rejection of close relationships, abstinence from direct socio-cultural ties, and refusal to participate in the fate of an ethnic community in conflict situations. In the range of ethno-social distance, such relationships can be interpreted as "absolute indifference".
4,1 – 4,5	Tourists	"Ethnic isolation" – an orientation towards the closeness of ethnic groups who do not want to see representatives of other ethnic groups as citizens of their country, but do not object to their temporary stay as guests and tourists. Concerning specific ethnic groups, this meaning can be interpreted as "quite alien" and determine a predisposition to xenophobia (a hidden form of xenophobia).
4,51 – 5,0	Enemy/ adversary	"Ethnic xenophobia" – a high degree of prevalence of open xenophobic attitudes. The open unwillingness to allow representatives of any ethnic group to enter their country reflects the perception of representatives of this ethnicity as "completely strangers" and is an indicator of open xenophobia.

Considering the demographic parameters and the status of the Kazakh people as a state-forming nation, the measurement of ethno-social distance was based on the logic of two indicators: "the attitude of others to Kazakhs" and "the attitude of Kazakhs to others" ethnic groups. Applying the aforementioned formula for calculating the Bogardus Scale, a range of ethno-social distance of eleven groups to the Kazakhs was identified (Table 2).

Table 2. *Table 4. Social distance of representatives of other ethnic groups concerning Kazakhs in ascending order, in points*

Tatar	Chechen	Russian	German	Ukrainian	Dungan	Azerbaij.	Tajik	Uighur	Uzbek	Korean
1,88	1,88	1,97	2	2,05	2,28	2,36	2,37	2,45	2,48	2,87

Conclusions should be drawn from the results that the following ethnic groups Tatars of Astana city (1.76) and Karaganda region (1.82), Chechens of Karaganda city (1.82) and Akmola region (1.83), Russians from Pavlodar region (1.04) and Almaty city (1.08), Germans of Kostanay (1.88) and Akmola region (1.90) are ready to enter into the marriage alliance with Kazakhs. These mentioned ethnic groups may express a desire for assimilation in favor of the Kazakh culture and linguistic community and share the values of the Kazakhs.

The vast majority of ethnic groups such as Ukrainians of Pavlodar and Aktobe regions (1.70), Dungans of Zhambyl region (2.17), Tajiks of Turkestan region (2.25), Uzbeks of Shymkent city (2.06) and Turkestan region (2.13) adhere to the course of friendly relations with Kazakhs and can demonstrate socio-cultural openness.

On an integral scale, Koreans of the Kyzylorda region (2.46) represent a good-neighborly attitude, striving for mutual assistance and mutual aid, but with specific ethnic boundaries.

In Kazakhstan's reality, the range of ethnic attitudes is influenced by several factors: the number of ethnic representatives and their share of the total population in the region, their settlement pattern (compact or dispersed living), the presence of conflict situations, and socio-economic situation. When researching the ethno-social distance of 11 ethnic groups to the Kazakhs, we identified the following distinctive features of existing attitudes:

1. Demographic rule: The smaller the proportion of an ethnic group from the entire population of the region, the longer their ethno-social distance from the Kazakhs. The small number strengthens the instinct of ethnic self-preservation and the fear of being absorbed by the majority, which subsequently leads to a clear delineation of borders. For instance, Dungans of Almaty region (2.74) represent a longer distance to Kazakhs compared to Dungans from Zhambyl region (2.17). The small number of Dungans in Almaty region can explain this difference and their lower economic activity compared to Zhambyl and Almaty Dungans, who are ready for kinship and friendly relations. A similar situation is noticeable among the Germans: the largest number of Germans live in Karaganda region, but their share in the total population of the region is less compared to the Germans living in the Akmola and Kostanay regions. This is expressed in the fact that the Germans of Karaganda region are ready to accept Kazakhs as friends, but not to enter into marital relations;

2. Reaction to traumatic experience: The more incidents and the more painful the experience of conflict interactions, the greater the remoteness of ethnic groups from each other. Conflicts tend to impose negative emotions about their experiences in the collective ethnic memory, which can become grudge triggers for many years to come. Thus, systematic clashes in the villages of Pidgim, Shonzhi and Shelek are the cause of a crisis of interethnic trust. In this regard, the Uighurs of Zhetysu (2.78) and Almaty (2.95) regions can perceive Kazakhs only as neighbors. In turn, the Uighurs of Almaty are ready to create families with Kazakhs (1.50), since in this region interethnic relations between ethnic groups do not have a conflict painful past.

Summarizing the above-mentioned, we can say that the attitudes range of representatives of other ethnic groups towards Kazakhs is quite friendly and does not reach the level of high distancing.

Measuring the indicators of the "attitude of Kazakhs to other" ethnic groups is interesting because it makes it possible to identify points of contact and rejection, as well as to study the unifying role of Kazakhs in the consolidation of the entire people of Kazakhstan. Compared with the range of others to Kazakhs, the social distance of Kazakhs to other ethnic groups is longer (Table 3).

Table 2. *Table 4. Social distance of representatives of other ethnic groups concerning Kazakhs in ascending order, in points*

Russian	Uzbek	Uighur	Tatar	German	Dungan	Tajik	Korean	Chechen	Azerbaijani
1,88	1,88	1,97	2	2,05	2,28	2,36	2,37	2,45	2,48

To the Russians. As can be seen from the table, Kazakhs, according to the Bogardus scale, are closer and more tolerant to Russians. The above-mentioned hypothesis about the mirror-friendly Kazakh-Russian relations that are based on the historical past, and cultural and linguistic unity has been confirmed. At the same time, Russians are closer to Kazakhs, than Kazakhs are to them. If Russians are ready to enter into kinship

relations with Kazakhs (1.97), then friendly relations are preferable for Kazakhs (2.70). In the regional context, Kazakhs of Zhetysu (1.74) and Kostanay (1.93) regions are ready to enter into kinship unions with Russians. In turn, Kazakhs of Atyrau (3.53) and Pavlodar (3.52) regions would prefer to identify Russians as fellow citizens. In the first case, the short distance may be associated with a large proportion of Russians among the population of the Kostanay region (33.6%) and the Russification of Kazakhs in the Zhetysu region. The second reason, the ethno-social attitudes of the inhabitants of western Kazakhstan may be related to the mono-ethnicity of the region (93% of the inhabitants are Kazakhs and only 4.3% are Russians). Then, to the high level of national consciousness of Kazakhs (70.1% according to the census, speak Kazakh in everyday life). The small number of Russians in the region and rare communication, affects the formation of false warnings and hetero-stereotypes.

To the Uzbeks. The average republican range of distance between Kazakhs and Uzbeks (3.34) is interpreted as "colleagues (neither one's own nor someone else's)" and implies readiness for periodic contact but without kinship and territorial involvement. Due to the high proportion of Uzbeks (15.9%) of the total population of Turkestan region and dispersed settlement, the Kazakhs of this region keep a short distance from them, perceiving them as friends (2.44). Kazakhs of Turkestan (2.65), Akmola (2.76), and Kostanay (2.70) regions are ready to coexist with Uzbeks. Kazakhs of East Kazakhstan region (3.05) and Abai region (3.13) want to conduct labor relations. Kazakhs from the Karaganda region (3.58) and Astana city (3.67) want to perceive Kazakhs as fellow citizens; and as tourists, they would like to see Kazakhs from the Mangystau region (4.15) and North Kazakhstan region (4.09). In the latter cases, a quantitative relationship is visible: the lower the proportion of Uzbeks among the population of the region, the longer the social distance.

To the Uighurs. The attitude of Kazakhs towards other ethnic groups, except Russians and Uzbeks, can be described as "ethnic neutrality". Social attitudes towards Uighurs are most favorable among the Kazakhs of Shymkent city (2.54), Turkestan (2.60), Zhetysu (2.70), and Akmola (2.80) regions, and are perceived as "neighbors". Kazakhs of Kostanay (3.12), Ulytau (3.22), and East Kazakhstan (3.25) regions are ready to enter into labor relations with Uighurs. Abai (3.51) and Pavlodar (3.55) regions would like to accept them as fellow citizens. Kazakhs from Almaty (4.32) and Atyrau (4.17) regions want to see Uighurs as tourists.

To the Tatars. During the years of Kazakhstani independence, there have been no Kazakh-Tatar conflicts in the chronology of interethnic relations, and the likelihood of disagreements is unlikely. The largest number of regions: Astana (4.20), Atyrau (4.21), Zhambyl (4.25), Karaganda (4.28), Kyzylorda (4.30), and Mangystau (4.47) regions take Tatars as fellow citizens, representing ethnic neutrality. According to the gradation of range attitudes, the Kazakhs of Shymkent city (2.63), Turkestan (2.59), Zhetysu (2.90), and Kostanay (2.97) regions are the most tolerant to Tatars, expressing readiness to accept Tatars as neighbors. Kazakhs of Almaty city (3.47), and East Kazakhstan (3.40) region perceive Tatars as colleagues.

To the Dungans. The majority of Dungans live in Almaty city (19.1%) and Zhambyl region (72.7%). The Korday events harmed the level of trust between Dungans and Kazakhs. Kazakhs only as fellow citizens, as in Ulytau (3.36), Abai (3.51), East Kazakhstan (3.59) regions, and Pavlodar (3.63) region, perceive the Dungans of Almaty city (3.79) and Zhambyl (4.0) region. The Kazakhs of Kyzylorda (4.09), Aktobe (4.11), Karaganda (4.29), and Atyrau (4.32) regions would like to accept Dungans as tourists.

The distance to the Dungans remains among the Kazakhs of Astana city (4.60) Almaty region (4.87) and the West Kazakhstan region (5.04). Kazakhs of the Turkestan region are ready to enter into friendly relations with Dungans (2.47). In this case, the negative retrospective of the Korday events, a lot of speculation and unverified information published on social networks, and the closeness of the Dungans themselves, including the enclave of settlement, have an impact on the formation of distances and hetero-stereotypes.

To the Germans. A significant part of the Germans mainly settled in northern regions and Karaganda region. Nevertheless, the southern part of the country is also friendly to the Germans, whose inhabitants are ready to live next to them: Shymkent (2.61) and Almaty (2.94) cities, then Turkestan (2.74) and Zhetysu (2.92) regions. In the northern regions, Kazakhs of Akmola (2.74) and Kostanay (2.95) regions are ready to accept Germans as neighbors. Kazakhs of the Ulytau region (3.74) accept them as colleagues. Kazakhs of Abai (3.57), Pavlodar (3.61), East Kazakhstan (3.76), and Aktobe (3.87) regions perceive their fellow citizens. Residents of Kyzylorda (4.14), Karaganda (4.26), North Kazakhstan (4.26) regions, then Zhambyl (4.30) and Atyrau, West Kazakhstan (4.91) and Almaty (5.04) regions express their greatest distance.

To the Tajiks. The ethno-social distance of Kazakhs to Tajiks is estimated as friendly (2.66). Considering that the majority of the Tajik community (72.3%) live in the Turkestan region, positive attitudes indicate the erasure of ethnic boundaries. In addition, the smallest distances to Tajiks are observed in Shymkent (2.54), Zhetysu (2.73), and Akmola (2.85) regions. Kazakhs of Almaty (3.33), Kostanay (3.14), and Pavlodar (3.38) regions are ready to work together with Tajiks. Kazakhs of Ulytau (3.51), Abai (3.65), and East Kazakhstan (3.79) regions are ready to perceive Tajiks as compatriots. Residents of Kyzylorda (4.24), Karaganda (4.35), Zhambyl, Aktobe (4.36), and Atyrau (4.39) regions would like to see them as tourists. The greatest distance is observed among Kazakh residents of Almaty region (5.35).

To the Koreans. Representatives of the Korean community live dispersed throughout the country, and only 31.6% of the entire ethnic group are settled in Almaty city, but in Karaganda region – 9.7%. Kazakh residents of Shymkent city are ready to have friendly relations with Koreans (2.46). Kazakhs of Turkestan (2.65), Zhetysu (2.78), Akmola (2.96) and Kostanay (2.99) regions and Almaty city (2.98) have good-neighborly relations. Kazakhs of the Pavlodar region (3.50) are ready for good-neighborly relations. As fellow citizens, Kazakhs perceive Koreans of Ulytau (3.61) and Abai (3.62) regions. Residents of East Kazakhstan region (4.13), Aktobe (4.20), Zhambyl (4.21), Kyzylorda (4.25), Atyrau (4.26), Karaganda (4.35), North Kazakhstan (4.46) regions are ready to accept Koreans as tourists. The greatest distances are typical for the Kazakhs of the West Kazakhstan region (5.12), Mangystau (4.66), and Almaty (5.66) regions.

The ethno-social distance of Kazakhs towards ***Chechens and Azerbaijanis*** is identical regionally, which indicates the same representation of two different ethnic groups with completely different cultural characteristics. Kazakhs of Turkestan, Akmola, Zhetysu regions, and Shymkent city are equally friendly and ready to coexist with two ethnic groups. Kazakhs of the Kostanay region would like to work together. Kazakhs of Almaty, Abai, Ulytau, and Pavlodar regions want to see them as fellow citizens. Kazakhs of Aktobe, Atyrau, East Kazakhstan regions, North Kazakhstan region, then Zhambyl, Karaganda, and Kyzylorda regions are ready to accept Chechens and Azerbaijanis only as tourists. The greatest distances to Chechens and Azerbaijanis are observed among the Kazakhs of West Kazakhstan region, Almaty region, and Astana city.

The ranking of the ethno-social distance of Kazakhs to other ethnic groups is presented in a color scheme, which allows for visualization of the received data.

Table 4. *Social distance of Kazakhs concerning other ethnic groups by region, in ascending order, in points*
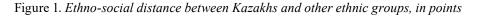
1-1,5	Spouses		3,1-3,5	Colleagues	
1,51-2,0	Relatives		3,51-4,0	Fellow citizens	
2,1-2,50	Friends		4,1-4,5	Tourists	
2,51-3,0	Neighbors		4,51-5,0	Enemy/adversary	

Regions	Russian	Uzbek	Uighur	Tatar	German	Dungan	Tajik	Korean	Chechen	Azer-baijani	Average value
Shymkent city	2,53	2,44	2,54	2,63	2,61	2,60	2,54	2,46	2,56	2,59	2,55
Turkestan	2,40	2,65	2,60	2,59	2,74	2,47	2,66	2,65	2,64	2,55	2,61
Zhetysu	1,74	2,64	2,70	2,90	2,92	2,65	2,73	2,78	2,77	2,93	2,69
Akmola	2,03	2,76	2,80	2,75	2,74	2,89	2,85	2,96	2,86	2,94	2,81
Kostanay	1,93	2,70	3,12	2,97	2,95	3,23	3,14	2,99	3,10	3,07	2,93
Almaty city	2,44	2,78	3,70	3,47	2,94	3,79	3,33	2,98	3,72	3,80	3,31
Ulytau	3,05	3,26	3,22	3,55	3,47	3,36	3,51	3,61	3,74	3,74	3,46
Abai	2,94	3,13	3,51	3,58	3,57	3,51	3,65	3,62	3,66	3,54	3,48
East Kazakhstan	2,71	3,05	3,25	3,40	3,76	3,59	3,79	4,13	4,09	4,06	3,59
Pavlodar	3,52	3,67	3,55	3,53	3,61	3,63	3,38	3,50	3,73	3,79	3,61
Aktobe	2,27	3,46	3,95	3,95	3,87	4,11	4,36	4,20	4,27	4,36	3,89
Kyzylorda	2,66	3,70	3,99	4,30	4,14	4,09	4,24	4,25	4,37	4,44	4,04
Karaganda	3,03	3,58	4,24	4,28	4,26	4,29	4,35	4,35	4,34	4,31	4,14
North Kazakhstan	2,89	4,09	4,24	4,24	4,25	4,23	4,25	4,46	4,33	4,31	4,14
Zhambyl	3,19	3,67	4,06	4,25	4,30	4,00	4,36	4,21	4,59	4,50	4,16
Atyrau	3,53	3,81	4,17	4,21	4,48	4,32	4,39	4,26	4,19	4,50	4,20
Astana city	3,13	3,67	4,54	4,20	4,56	4,60	4,54	4,43	4,54	4,53	4,28
Mangistau	3,10	4,15	4,27	4,47	4,45	4,36	4,63	4,66	4,58	4,50	4,35
West Kazakhstan	2,68	3,76	4,58	4,44	4,91	5,04	4,80	5,12	4,97	4,69	4,50
Almaty region	2,27	3,92	4,32	5,44	5,04	4,87	5,35	5,66	5,70	5,66	4,89

Thus, it can be concluded that Kazakhs demonstrate a more reserved attitude towards members of other ethnic groups (Figure 1). The total range of attitudes of other ethnic groups towards Kazakhs is 2.24 points, which reflects a friendly attitude and a desire for unity with the Kazakh community and integration into a single nation. However, for Kazakhs in their relations with representatives of other ethnic groups, the category of relationships at the "fellow citizens" level is more important (3.68).

This behavior is explained by the fact that different types of identity intersect in the self-consciousness of the population. The conflict of identity is influenced by the regional and ethnic specifics of the country, the religiosity of the population, demographic and socio-cultural diversity, and the type of settlement. In Kazakh society, there is a growing demand to strengthen the position of the Kazakhs as the basic ethnic core, and points of attraction for other groups. This actualizes the uncertainty of the perception of the concept of "Kazakh" among the population: as an ethnonym – belonging to a certain ethnic group or a polytomy as a joining element. In this case, the rise of nationalism (feelings of national identity) among Kazakhs (including qandas) is a defensive reaction due to fears of losing their ethnic and cultural identity and statehood.

Figure 1 clearly shows the ethno-social distances, which allows us to visually test the hypothesis of a "mirror relationship" between Kazakhs and Russians, which demonstrates mutual closeness.

Figure 1. *Ethno-social distance between Kazakhs and other ethnic groups, in points*

In that way, when studying the ethno-social distance of Kazakhs to ten ethnic groups, we have identified the following distinctive features of existing attitudes:

1. Persistent prejudices and stereotypical representations: With a decrease in the proportion of representatives of other ethnic groups in the places of residence of Kazakhs, the ethno-social distance between them increases. In Kazakh practice, prejudice against certain communities (including ethnic ones) is caused by the scaling of the "language of enmity" in the media space in case of conflict situations involving ethnic groups. The "language of enmity" generates the fear of projecting undesirable clashes in the region of residence, thereby creating early negative socio-cultural ideas about the ethnic group and negative hetero-stereotypes.

2. Interethnic marriages as a reflection of integration. As is well known, willingness or desire to enter interethnic marriages are signs of high tolerance and integration, where most traditional ethnic boundaries are erased. The respondents' attitudes towards interethnic marriages and friendships differ depending on the place of residence – polyethnic/mono-ethnic region, age cohorts, and language environment. For example, Kazakh informants in Almaty city and Almaty region are more inclined to interethnic marriages for reasons of preservation and transfer of cultural values to the next generation. Vice versa, representatives of other ethnic groups demonstrate an intention to create family relations with Kazakhs.

> Certainly, I would like my son-in-law to be Kazakh. Because only Kazakhs know how to respect their elders.
> *Almaty city, a Kazakh woman, 61 years old*

> ...I have a very positive attitude towards them, why because I plan to marry a Kazakh woman.
> *Almaty city, Uighur, 29 years old*

Respondents in the western part of the country are more concerned about keeping the "blood purity".

> To be honest, of course, when a Kazakh man marries
> a Kazakh woman and a Russian man marries a Russian woman,
> anyway, we must keep ethnic purity. I had many Russian friends,
> but I did not even have the thoughts to marry a Russian or a Ukrainian.

East Kazakhstan region, a Kazakh woman, 51 years old

If the older generation of the Kazakh community considers the cultural code as the primary marker for bringing ethnic groups closer together, then the religious component plays an important role for informants of younger and middle ages. One could say that the significance of religious identity predominates over cultural identity; thereby ethnic identity goes into the background. Perhaps this is due to the increasing religiosity of young people and the trends toward Arabization in social networks.

> No, I would probably recommend (note Kazakh)
> ...in such marriages, what faith, what culture will their child adhere to?
> *Almaty region, a Kazakh woman, 39 years old*

Based on the results of in-depth interviews, the following conclusions can be drawn, which may be a response to the transforming values of the traditional representation of the Kazakh community:

1. Shifting the taboo of interethnic marriages to the nomadic philosophy. The rule on the observance of "blood purity" comes from the steppe laws of the rulers of the Kazakh Khanate – Yesim Khan ("Yesim hannin eski zholy") and Tauke Khan ("Zheti Zhargy"). Nomadic codes prohibited marriages up to the seventh generation (Zheti ata), which helped to protect the nation from incest and severe genetic diseases, and allowed preserving the gene pool of the Kazakh people (Kozgambaeva, 2020). It should be understood that these rules are intended for the Kazakhs themselves and apply to the intraethnic space, but they do not scale to interethnic relations. The modern taboo on interethnic marriages should be interpreted from the point of view of protection against assimilation and fear of absorption by another culture and, consequently, the loss of the identity of the genealogy.

2. Isolationist ethno-nationalism as a risk of archaization of society. The development of sovereign Kazakhstan is parallel with the cultural modernization of the society, which includes spiritual rebirth through a return to the origins – a turn to the roots and traditions. Traditions, rituals, and folk folklore (*omens, proverbs, and sayings*) act as spiritual and moral regulators of society's behavior and have such characteristic properties as ambiguity and plasticity. Practically, it is impossible to keep traditions in an immutable appearance and strive to maintain them in spatiotemporal modes. Some traditions, due to objective reasons, globalization, and synthetic processes, may lose their relevance, while others may adapt to new realities. In addition, some traditional principles, due to erroneous interpretation, can be destroyed and replicated in everyday life in a distorted form. For this reason, when applying any multi-century-old traditional practices, it is necessary to delve into the historical context to understand the purpose. For example, expressions created for historical and political reasons and related to issues of interethnic relations: The provided phrases: «Орыстан досың болса, жанында айбалтаң болсын» ("If you have a Russian friend, keep an ax on your side") and «Қара қытай қаптаса, сары орыс әкеңдей көрінер» ("If Chinese attack, the Russian will seem

like a benefactor") vividly demonstrate hetero-stereotypes towards other ethnic groups. In this regard, the preservation of such negative attitudes by Kazakhs leads to processes of isolation because of nationalist views, risking the archaization of consciousness.

CONCLUSION

The research on social distancing is highly relevant as it demonstrates the cultural openness/closeness of certain ethnic groups. At present, a clear picture of the desired future of representatives of ethnic groups regarding issues of unity and integration is emerging. Ethnic groups express their commitment to the national interests of the country and the unity around the Kazakh core, which highlights issues of nation-building and inclusivity.

The archived results have been interpreted with consideration for the realities of Kazakhstan. The developed conclusions can be applied to scientifically based forecasts about the trends in the development of various ethno-social processes in the country.

REFERENCES:

A.Y.Levit (Ed.). (1997). Kul'turologija. XX vek. Slovar' [Cultural studies. XX century. Dictionary]. St. Petersburg: Universitetskaja kniga.

Abdigali, B., & Ahmedzhanov, A. (2007). Kazak missijasy: (Kazak yltyn zhandandyru tyzhyrymdamasy): [Kazakh mission. (Concept of revival of the Kazakh nation)]. Almaty.

Cheshko, S. (2000). Raspad SSSR: jetnopoliticheskij analiz [The collapse of the USSR: an ethnopolitical analysis] (2 ed.). Moscow: IJeA RAN.

Kadyrzhanov, R. (Ed.). (2020). Kul'turnaja integracija jetnosov v Kazahstane [Cultural integration of ethnic groups of Kazakhstan]. Almaty: IFPR KN MON RK.

Kozgambaeva, G. (2020). Kazak halkyndagy «Zheti ata» dastyri [The tradition of "Zheti Ata" in the Kazakh people]. Abaj atyndagy KazYPU-nin habarshysy, 1(64), 359-366.

Mather, D., Jones, S., & Moats, S. (2017). Improving upon Bogardus: Creating a More Sensitive and Dynamic Social Distance Scale. Survey Practice, 10(4). doi:10.29115/SP-2017-0026

S.Y.Levit (Ed.). (1998). Kul'turologija. XX vek. Jenciklopedija [Cultural studies. XX century. Encyclopedia] (Vol. Vol. 1). St. Petersburg: Universitetskaja kniga.

The population by individual ethnic groups of the Republic of Kazakhstan at the beginning of 2023. (2024, February 5). Retrieved from Bureau of National Statistics of the Agency for Strategic Planning and Reforms of the Republic of Kazakhstan: https://stat.gov.kz/ru/industries/social-statistics/demography/publications/6373/

The results of the National Population Census of 2021 in the Republic of Kazakhstan. (2024, February 5). Retrieved from Bureau of National Statistics of the Agency for Strategic Planning and Reforms of the Republic of Kazakhstan: https://stat.gov.kz/ru/national/2021/

Tusini, S. (2022, January 27). A temporal perspective to empirically investigate the concept of social distance. Quality & Quantity, 56, 4421–4435. doi:10.1007/s11135-022-01319-7

Tyszka, K. (2009). "Homo Sovieticus" Two Decades Later. Polish Sociological Review, 168, 507–522. Retrieved January 10, 2024, from http://www.jstor.org/stable/41275122