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THE SOCIO-CULTURAL RELATIONS BETWEEN KAZAKHSTAN AND THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

The article explores the main directions of the socio-cultural relations between Kazakhstan and the US. After gaining the independence, Kazakhstan began to work actively in the development of exchange and educational programs with the United States, which was accepted with enthusiasm and found wide support across the Atlantic. It is important to emphasize that the development of cooperation in this area was not limited by any political or ideological factors, which ensured the continuity of the process of teaching generation after generation. Undoubtedly, Bolashak is the most effective program and it is worth to mention the achievements of other bilateral initiatives – the FLEX, Fulbright, TEA, JFDP, UGRAD programs.

Key words: Kazakhstan, the US, Bolashak scholarship, educational exchange programs, cultural diplomacy, soft power, international projects.

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Қазақстан мен Америка Құрама Штаттары арасындағы әлеуметтік-мәдени байланыстар

Мақалада Қазақстан мен АҚШ арасындағы әлеуметтік-мәдени қатынастардың негізгі бағыттары талқыланады. Тәуелсіздік алғаннан кейін, Қазақстан АҚШ-пен білім беру бағдарламаларын дамытуға және алмасуға белсене атсалысты. Бұл саладағы ынтымақтастықтың дамуы кез келген саяси немесе идеологиялық факторлармен шектеліп қалмайтындығын атап өту керек, бұл ұрпақтан кейінгі ұрпақты оқыту үрдісінің сабақтастығын қамтамасыз етті. «Болашақ» – бұл ең тиімді бағдарлама және басқа да екі жақты бастамалар FLEX, Fulbright, TEA, JFDP және UGRAD сияқты бағдарламалардың жетістіктерін атап өту керек.

Түйін сөздер: Қазақстан, АҚШ, «Болашақ» стипендиясы, білім беру бағдарламалары, мәдени дипломатия, жұмсақ күш, халықаралық жобалар.

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Социально-культурные отношения между Казахстаном и Соединенными Штатами Америки

В статье рассматриваются основные направления социально-культурных отношений между Казахстаном и США. После обретения независимости Казахстан начал активно работать над развитием обменных и образовательных программ с Соединенными Штатами, что

было воспринято с энтузиазмом и получило широкую поддержку. Важно подчеркнуть, что развитие сотрудничества в этой сфере не было ограничено какими-либо политическими или идеологическими факторами, что обеспечивало непрерывность процесса обучения поколения за поколением. Несомненно, наиболее эффективной программой является «Болашак» и стоит упомянуть о достижениях других двусторонних инициатив, таких программ как FLEX, Fulbright, TEA, JFDP, UGRAD.

Ключевые слова: Казахстан, США, стипендия Болашак, образовательные программы, культурная дипломатия, мягкая сила, международные проекты.

Introduction

The close cooperation between the United States of America and the Republic of Kazakhstan started in 1991. The relations with the West occupy an important place in the structure of Kazakhstan's multi-vector foreign policy. The United States remains the most important investor and partner of Kazakhstan in the energy, political and socio-cultural spheres. The US government sponsors exchange and educational programs, sending more than 100 Kazakhstanis to America for short-term and long-term education annually. The programs are addressed to a wide audience – from high school students to graduate students and scientists. In the educational sphere the United States provides technical assistance in organizing student exchanges, also invites American teachers to participate in training programs and shares experience.

Methods of research

This article uses a historical method that makes it possible to pursue the evolution of humanitarian relations between Kazakhstan and the United States. The results of the Bolashak program were analyzed, as a result of this program specialists were trained in our republic.

The comparative method consists in the analysis of documents of two states related to education. The package of documents allows to pursue the dynamics of the legislative framework. It is worth to note that graduates of American universities are represented in government and business.

The main part

Since the end of Cold war and the collapse of the USSR, Kazakhstan paid specific attention to the issue of social-cultural development. Challenges of new world demanded high-skill qualifications from Kazakhs in order to be competitive on international labor market. It has been widely recognized that the Soviet system of education didn't meet requirements of globalization era since it was under great pressure

of Marxist ideology that restricted the freedom of education and science.

According to this, the government of Kazakhstan headed by Nursultan Nazarbayev decided to transform the education system in accordance with best global standards. At that times the leading role in education was hold by Western universities where the American ones were considered the best- Harvard and Stanford graduates took the best jobs, Yale alumnies become the US presidents, and in general the leadership of US corporations was unquestionable.

Consequently, the Kazakhstan government has been looking a way to apply western experience in the newly-independent republic. At the dawn of independence, the Republic of Kazakhstan needed highly- qualified professionals capable to conduct further reforms and worthily represent the country at the international arena. For the first time in history of the post-Soviet countries, talented youth of Kazakhstan got a chance to obtain education abroad. The Bolashak educational program announced by the head of state Nursultan Nazarbayev in 1993 became a successful brand of Kazakhstani education.

Year 1997 was one of milestones in the country's development. The Head of State presented 2030 Kazakhstan Development Strategy. The President Nursultan Nazarbayev in his annual State-of-the-Nation-Address announced that: «One of our basic assets is undoubtedly quality of our population, that is of our human resources. By right, we may be proud of a highly educated population with a pretty high standard of scientific and creative potential. Few countries can boast of it and many strive to achieve such standard as one of their strategic goals. This indeed is a tremendous achievement of our people... and of the former system for that matter. We must do our utmost to further develop this invaluable asset of ours and grant it ever new, ever civilized opportunities of development» (Nazarbayev, 1997: www.akorda.kz Date of circulation: 5.11.2018).

In this period of Kazakhstan's history, Nursultan Nazarbayev staked on the training of our own highly skilled professionals and the talented young

Kazakhstanis. In 2000, the President signed a decree «On the republican commission for training abroad».

After the collapse of the USSR, the entire ideological stratum was eliminated, leaving the countries «defenseless» in the face of globalization processes within the framework of a liberal ideological concept actively promoted by the United States and European countries. In such conditions, a rapprochement with the leaders of the Western world helped the people of Kazakhstan to better understand the processes of globalization and adapt the new conditions, which was necessary as part of a course to increase the competitiveness of the nation.

The relations with the United States are important not only in the economics and politics, but also need to take into account contemporary socio-cultural realities. The valuable source in the relations between the US and Kazakhstan is the text of «Bilateral Charter on Democratic Partnership», which contains provisions aimed at strengthening the rule of law, supporting market reforms and respecting human rights in Kazakhstan (Charter of Democratic Partnership, 1994: <http://kazakhstan.news-city.info> Date of circulation: 5.11.2018).

Also, it is worth noting the materials of individual departments, such as «The political environment of Kazakhstan in the post-Soviet era» from the US Department of Justice, which clearly shows that in 1994, American experts already understood the internal processes in Kazakhstan. In addition, it is important to mention the numerous documents on the implementation of the program «Joint Threat Reduction» or the «Nunn-Lugar Program» on the processing and elimination of the USSR's nuclear heritage in the four former Soviet republics – Russia, Kazakhstan, Belarus and Ukraine. For Kazakhstan, the most important documents were the «Lisbon Protocol» in 1992 and the «Budapest Memorandum» in 1994.

Within the framework of bilateral agreements, it is worth noting documents concluded not only with the US government (for example, the «Agreement on trade relations between the government of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the government of the United States of America, 1992» or «On the purchase of highly enriched uranium» 1994), but also with individual US multinational corporations – «Chevron», «J.P. Morgan», «Halliburton Company». Documents of these types reflect the interest and willingness of Western businesses and the US government to invest in the development of individual industries in Kazakhstan.

It should be emphasized that relations between the United States and Kazakhstan were built not

only in the framework of political, trade and energy cooperation. Often outside the study, education and culture remain unfair, which made no less a contribution to the development of Kazakhstan than the oil and gas wealth of the country.

The Bolashak presidential scholarship programme, introduced in November 1993, has since become a key ingredient in Kazakhstan's history of independent development as well as an integral part of the country's image abroad. Under this program, any citizen of Kazakhstan could claim full coverage of education and related expenses at the best foreign universities at the expense of the state budget. In the matter of education, the world recognized leaders have been and remain US universities, where most of the first-year fellows were sent. Upon completion of their graduate degree, Bolashak scholars are required to return to work in Kazakhstan for at least five years. The program is designed to train future leaders in business, international relations, law, science, engineering and other key fields.

Since its implementation in 1993, more than 6,500 students have been awarded the scholarship, with most choosing to study in the United States and Great Britain. Many students successfully graduated from America's leading universities including Harvard, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Columbia, Duke, Georgetown, Emory, Carnegie Mellon, Indiana University, Vanderbilt and many others (Bolashak scholarship : www.kazakhembus.com Date of circulation: 5.11.2018).

Over 25 years of the Bolashak program implementation, 12,898 scholarships were awarded. 785 scholarships were awarded in the first ten years from 1994 to 2004, and 12,046 scholarships were awarded from 2005 to 2017. According to the results of the meeting of the Republican Commission for training abroad on May 24, 2018, the Bolashak scholarship was awarded to 67 applicants.

Today 10,096 specialists have been trained: 2,858 – for a bachelor's program, 5,098 – for master's programs, 136 – for postgraduate studies, internships and clinical residency, 129 – for doctoral studies, 1,875 – for internships.

The total number of graduates, 53% completed studies in the humanities, 37.8% – engineering, 7.4% – medical and 1.8% – creative specialties. At the moment, there are 1,255 scholarship holders, 14 of them – under the undergraduate program, 1,067 – graduate schools, 120 – doctoral studies, 1 – postgraduate studies, 53 people are trained.

The distribution of scholarship holders by country: in Great Britain and Ireland – 48.8%, USA and Canada – 37.1%, countries of continental

Europe – 4.7%, Asia and Oceania – 4.8%, and the Russian Federation – 4.6% (Center for International Programs: www.bolashak.gov.kz Date of circulation: 5.11.2018).

The list of priority specialties for Bolashak program applicants is annually generated based on requests from government agencies, universities and research organizations in Kazakhstan. According to statistics, the most popular specialties among applicants for the Bolashak scholarship are state policy, political science, public administration, pedagogy and psychology and accounting and auditing. Finance and economics are among the technical specialties applicants actively submit for the oil and gas business. The list also includes petrochemicals and petrochemical synthesis, the development of oil and gas, computer science, information technology and systems, information security, computing equipment and software. A public health major is prevalent among medical staff.

The scholarship has already gained huge international recognition. At the Going Global International Conference held in Miami in 2014, Bolashak was mentioned as the best scholarship programme in the world. Russia's programme of training specialists abroad used experiences from the Bolashak programme. The Chinese national research fund and various organisations from Poland, Malaysia, and Ukraine are continuously studying Bolashak programme mechanisms. Bolashak scholars are playing a key role in shaping Kazakhstan's positive image abroad (Orazgalieva, 2014: <https://astanatimes.com> Date of circulation: 6.11.2018)

Achievements in the field of education, an indicator of human capital accumulated by the population, is the main determinant of a country's welfare and its global economic competitiveness. By providing financial subsidies for teaching students and obtaining academic degrees at foreign universities, the Bolashak program has become an effective strategy for promoting the human capital of the nation.

Over the past 20 years, Kazakhstan has achieved significant success in the transition from a planned economy to a market economy. And the Bolashak program has contributed to this transition. Over the 25 years of its existence, the Bolashak program has benefited not only individual scholars, but also the entire Kazakh society. The program could be a role model for other transition economies.

Today, graduates who have trained on the Bolashak scholarship implement hundreds of

scientific developments and projects in the field of education, health care, culture, science and technology, and achieve great results. Bolashak Scholarship turned into some kind of guarantor of successful career growth and professional self-realization of its graduates.

In 2018 at the form «Human capital-the basis of modernization» dedicated to the 25th anniversary of the «Bolashak» scholarship the head of state stated: «that the cardiologists who had been educated under the Bolashak program conducted more than 33,000 heart operations, implemented more than 1,700 international standards and treatment algorithms. Young engineers are developing an automated energy management system and are developing mobile robots and hybrid platforms for use in large production facilities. In addition, they pay great attention to the introduction of technologies for environmental protection and sustainable development of the ecological environment» (Nazarbayev, 2018: www.inform.kz Date of circulation: 10.11.2018).

Practice shows, that «Bolashak» alumni make a significant contribution to development of the education system. The educational institutions of Kazakhstan employ about 400 former Bolashak students. Many of them work in five Nazarbayev Intellectual Schools and are involved in management of education (principals, heads of departments in universities, deputy deans, etc). 57 graduates carry out scientific research at universities and major research institutes. The Nazarbayev University employs about 200 Bolashak alumni, almost 90% of which are researchers (Sarinzhipov, 2013: www.kazpravda.kz Date of circulation: 10.11.2018)

Among the graduates of the international scholarship program «Bolashak» are well-known statesmen who received higher education in the universities of the United States, for example, Magzhan Auezov – former Chairman of the Board of ForteBank JSC, Bishimbayev Kuandyk – former Minister of National Economy of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Amrin Aslanbek- Ex-Vice-Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan and Darmen Sadvakasov – managing Partner of Dasco Consulting Group, International Grandmaster (Matrekov, 2016: <https://365info.kz> Date of circulation: 10.11.2018).

All these personalities are the result of Kazakhstan-American educational cooperation. Over time, the relations of the two states became closer, and the number of students who were sent to the United States as part of international educational programs gradually increased. The growing need

for specialists in the field of industrial-innovative development, information technology defined the United States as the leading vector for international exchanges.

Kazakhstan-American relations in the framework of the Bolashak international scholarship program, one should note the significance of American experience for Kazakhstan in the information and innovative development of the country, and the special importance of the knowledge of graduates of American universities in financing the Bolashak program for prosperity of the economic and scientific-technical sector of the country.

At the moment, the prospects for the development of bilateral Kazakh-American relations in the cultural and humanitarian sphere are evaluated extremely positively from both sides. Over 27 years of cooperation, the two countries did not experience serious crises or shocks that could adversely affect the translational momentum of convergence and exchange of experience.

Promotion of people-to-people programs is an important part of diplomacy for any country and, of course, for the United States. The fact is that diplomacy is not just providing visas for travelers, and not just the transfer of messages from government to government: it is also about creating strong ties between the two countries. And, ultimately, this is the most important thing, because it allows the two countries to have a solid foundation for cooperation, even when their government relations can pass through rough sections (Richard E. Hoagland, 2017: <https://astanatimes.com> Date of circulation: 10.11.2018).

The United States opened the doors of its best educational and cultural institutions for Kazakhstan, providing an opportunity to fully touch the accumulated global amount of knowledge and achievements that is stored in American libraries, funds and the minds of the best experts.

American cultural diplomacy in Kazakhstan is primarily carried out through cultural and educational programs. Main functions in the implementation of such programs belong to the US Embassy in Kazakhstan. For example, The Department of Culture at the US Embassy in Kazakhstan collaborates with Kazakhstani state and non-governmental organizations and institutions. The Department of Culture leads the activities of several American organizations that carry out educational exchanges between the United States and Kazakhstan. The main educational programs of the Department of Culture of the US Embassy include the following: Fulbright programs, the

international student exchange program (Global UGRAD), the Teacher Excellence Program (TEA), Summer Work and Travel, and the inclusive education program «Americans with Disabilities Act» (ADA) (US Embassy and Consulate in Kazakhstan : <https://kz.usembassy.gov> Date of circulation: 10.11.2018).

Regarding the cultural sphere, in 2018 the opening ceremony of the exhibition «Artists of the 19th and 20th centuries from private collections of the USA» was held in Astana. The exhibition showed paintings by famous Russian artists from private collections in the United States, who played a huge role in the history of art of the XIX-XX centuries, and devoted to the 20th anniversary of Astana. The exhibition is assembled from unique collections of magnificent artists, such as Natalia Goncharova, Alexey Savrasov, Robert Falk, and other famous personalities. Furthermore, the gallery of the National Club of Art in New York opened the exhibition «At the crossroads of Asia and Europe» masterpieces of the XX century from the collection of the Museum of Art named after A. Kasteev (Syzykbaev, 2018: www.inform.kz Date of circulation: 11.11.2018).

And in turn Kazakhstan organize meetings, concerts and exhibitions that demonstrate the high achievements of the Kazakh culture. Kazakh singers, classical music performers, the chamber orchestra of the State Conservatory Kurmangazy and folk Kazakh music ensembles successfully performed at the concert venues in Washington. As noted at the embassy, many Americans were surprised to discover for themselves the high development level and identity of the culture of Kazakhstan. At the same time, the unchanging interest of the American public is caused by the annual celebration of «Nauryz», which is celebrated by the staff of the embassies of Kazakhstan in the USA, exchange students and local diasporas in several US states at once.

Also, in addition to music, special attention is paid to literature and cinema. For example, in 2015, in order to popularize Kazakh and foreign literature on Kazakhstan in the United States, a presentation of the book «At Home on the Kazakh Steppe» dedicated to the celebration of the Day of Astana written by former Peace Corps volunteer Janet Givens was shown. Also, in the framework of the celebration of the 550th anniversary of the Kazakh Khanate the presentation of the documentaries «Kazakh Khandygy 550 Year» and «Desht-i-Kipchak: Secret Signs» was held in Washington and New York (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the

Republic of Kazakhstan: <http://mfa.gov.kz> Date of circulation: 11.11.2018).

«Soft power» of Kazakhstan came to the United States. So, in 2017 the Days of Culture and Cinema of Kazakhstan – Spirit of the Great Steppe opened in Los Angeles within the framework of the «Ruhani jagyru» program. The event is held in conjunction with the Embassy of Kazakhstan in the United States, the Ministry of Culture and Sports of Kazakhstan and the Academy of Cinematographic Arts and Sciences of Kazakhstan. The main goal of the Spirit of the Great Steppe is to acquaint the American audience with the rich national and cultural heritage of Kazakhstan. This event in the USA caused a special interest of the American people in Kazakh culture and became a new stage in the development of Kazakhstan-American cultural relations (<http://today.kz> Date of circulation: 11.11.2018).

Moreover, the international project «Opening of the Centers of Kazakh Literature and Culture in the National and Other Large Libraries of Foreign Countries» within the framework of the program «Bolashaka Bagadar – Ruhani Zhandyru» continues its implementation in the United States of America. Books about Kazakhstan are presented in one of the main libraries of the world, in the Library of the US Congress (<https://e-history.kz> Date of circulation: 11.11.2018).

In general, Kazakhstan and the United States have developed strong trusting relationships. Washington and Astana actively supports the initiatives of each other on a regional and global scale. The vivid example for this, is the signing of memorandum of understanding in the cultural area.

On October 11, 2018 Chairman of the United States Commission on the Conservation of American Heritage Abroad, Paul Packer, and the Minister of Culture and Sports of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Arystanbek Muhamediuly, signed a memorandum of understanding for the preservation of certain cultural heritage in Kazakhstan. It is noted that the memorandum will initiate the joint work of the United States and Kazakhstan to preserve the heritage of all national, religious and ethnic groups that live or lived on its territory, including victims of the genocide of World War II. This memorandum will serve as the basis for cooperation in the field of preservation of cultural heritage and will strengthen

cultural and humanitarian cooperation between the two countries. Paul Packer noted the importance of signing this document and he said «I sincerely believe that we can unite in our common desire to preserve the heritage for future generations and understanding the importance of this process» (<https://kz.usembassy.gov> Date of circulation: 11.11.2018).

Along with educational and cultural programs, the Embassy of the United States organizes various cultural events that contribute to improving cultural ties between the United States and Kazakhstan. A huge number of events were organized in honor of the 25th anniversary of bilateral relations: the visit of an international delegation of women leaders to Kazakhstan, Technical Forums in Almaty and Astana, the launch of «Maker Spaces» in American corners, «Love to Code» technical tour, business training in the United States, the exchange program with the center of Mohammad Ali and joint performances of American and Kazakhstan musicians and dancers, production of the musical in the style of Broadway in Kazakhstan, the English Teaching National Conference, USA-Kazakhstan Festival, Festival of the US-Kazakhstan films, National spelling competition, etc. Besides it is worth noting the high activity of the US offices in Kazakhstan insocial networks. Through numerous video messages, online contests and US initiatives are actively engaged in improving their image in Kazakhstan (US Embassy and Consulate in Kazakhstan : <https://kz.usembassy.gov> Date of circulation: 11.11.2018).

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is worth to note that the rapprochement of the two countries, in many respects, is based on the political will of state leaders and the consistent implementation of educational policies on both sides of the ocean. In the context of globalization, coordination in the field of culture is an essential function of the state, thanks to which countries can identify mutually beneficial cultural priorities and form the basis for a successful bilateral partnership. The implementation of various cultural events and educational programs in Kazakhstan gives the US the opportunity to improve not only US-Kazakhstan relations, but also its international image and reputation.

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