



The Social Process of Globalization. Return Migration and Cultural Change in Kazakhstan

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on the relationship between foreign and domestic policy. This is perhaps where the book's contribution could have been emphasised more strongly. Far from a criticism, it is an invitation to venture beyond idiographic focus on Russia into a comparative or aggregative debate on the interplay between ideas, society and foreign policy. The domestic–foreign policy discussion has for long drawn almost exclusively on Western European examples and is in need of other perspectives to enrich or unsettle its conclusions.

Finally, the very project of producing an edited volume on Russia's foreign policy at the time when the Ukrainian crisis broke out is commendable. The editors are frank about the difficulties this game-changing event posed for completing the volume. The outcome is definitely rewarding.

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Douglas W. Blum, *The Social Process of Globalization. Return Migration and Cultural Change in Kazakhstan*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016, vii + 214pp., £64.99/\$99.99 h/b.

KEY MECHANISMS ASSOCIATED WITH THE RISE OF GLOBALISATION stimulated the permanent interest of researchers in the social sciences and humanities. In his new book, Douglas W. Blum sets out to show how processes of social and cultural change are implemented within the framework of globalisation, and which of the existing social theories are confirmed by the results of his research.

Reading this book will captivate everyone interested in this field of research, especially those examining the cultural changes that have occurred in post-Soviet societies. The book focuses on the perception of 'cultural remittances' brought by return migrants and the social dynamic that this process has set into motion in contemporary Kazakhstan. The subjects of Blum's sociological studies are recipients of the Bolashak state scholarship, and of other international programmes, between the ages of 17 and 27. These individuals had the opportunity to study, work or receive professional training in universities in the United States for at least three months. The pool of interviewees also includes individuals who have had close contact with the subjects before and after their return (e.g. relatives, friends, colleagues).

This book provides a fascinating starting point for a balanced assessment of the results, particularly as it constitutes a truly scientific study characterised by objectivity and neutrality as opposed to the pathos of official reports or sceptical articles about the waste of public funds on expensive training that are frequently published in Kazakhstan.

The book begins with a chapter containing key methodological remarks on the usage of the term 'hybridity', and its relevance to social transmission and cultural change. As evidenced by the content of the second chapter, the author is well aware of the political, economic and socio-cultural situation in Kazakhstan, including the interests and concerns of selected groups of young people. Furthermore, he shows extreme care in the coverage of both the achievements and existing negative phenomena in the local system of social relations. Obviously, the author's personal experience of living in the country, carrying out field studies, provided him with considerable material, supported by a large number of data from credible sources: articles, monographs, reference information sites. A substantial number of bibliography references is listed in support of the book's methodological accuracy.

In the third chapter, 'Theory: Explaining cultural stability and change', Blum uses the concept of 'culture' enhanced by the inclusion of its cognitive and affective elements, 'identity' and 'identification'. The author's theoretical fundaments are located in Bourdieu's practice theory with its 'habitus' determining possibilities and actions, and in the critical realism of Margaret Archer, who does in turn emphasise 'reflexivity' as a means of making sense of the world. Despite the ontological tensions between these two theories, Blum succeeds in their integration: based on the synthesis suggested by

Dave Elder-Vass, Blum concludes that 'reflexive deliberation, and the (evolving) habitus each contribute to producing purposive action' (p. 29).

From Archer's theory, the author distinguishes three modes of reflexivity, which are crucial for understanding his empirical work. These include communicative reflexivity, based on conformity and perception of 'appropriateness' amongst certain individuals; critical reflexivity, or analytical self-consciousness; and discordant reflexivity, which includes key elements of the two prior forms. Blum then illustrates the essential attributes of each mode in the portraits of young returnees. Such sophisticated methodology, including a double hermeneutic approach focused on micro-foundational mechanisms, provided a successful implementation of the project. Ninety-two personal interviews were conducted between 2011 and 2012.

The fourth chapter examines in detail the enacted or rejected distinctive practices discussed by return migrants, including the problems of functional knowledge, openness, self-sufficiency, gender equality, dressing casually, postponing marriage, sitting improperly, doing volunteer work and being polite to strangers. Each case is followed by a discussion of the results from the vantage point of reflexivity. Not all these problems seem however to be socially significant. Informal dressing or late marriage, for instance, pre-dated the rise of globalisation and, previously, they were not considered worthy of any societal negotiation. However, in the panorama of borrowed values, they are now perceived by the young people of Kazakhstan as essential attributes of the American way of life.

Chapter 5 describes how the dichotomisation of the outlook of return migrants is embodied in the opposition of traditionalism and individualism. The author emphasises here the crucial role of reflexivity in triggering cultural changes, while remaining aware that certain aspects of the social and cultural contexts in Kazakhstani society can act as non-negotiable constraints in the legitimisation of new practices. Blum uses Chapter 6 to articulate his conclusions on the impact of reflexive orientation on cultural change of life. The changing identity of young people breaks in most cases not only the system of values and attitudes, but also the old social ties, creating instead new groups and forms of communication.

Some interpretations of interviewees may not be accurate, as there may be a tendency for young returnees to idealise their battle against prejudice and traditions and to romanticise their struggle to make meaningful, appropriate choices. This situation does not invalidate Blum's hypothesis, but more attention to a critical analysis of this aspect of data may certainly be needed.

Blum has produced a valuable book that raises issues calling for continued examination. He is doubtlessly correct that certain psychological factors, changes in long-term perspective, comparing assessments of participants' attitudes, and reflexivity prior to and after travelling abroad, are critically important issues that need to be examined further. We consider his attempt quite successful, and we hope that this book will be read not only by scholars interested in Kazakhstan's social processes and challenges, but also by those concerned with the understanding of globalisation's influence upon developing countries.

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